

THE ALBIGENSES,

A ROMANCE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "BERTRAM," A TRAGEDY;
"WOMAN; OR, POUR ET CONTRE," &c.

Sir, betake thee to thy faith,
For seventeen poniards are at thy bosom.
SHAKESPEARE'S *All's Well that Ends Well.*

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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TO

MRS. SMITH,

FITZWILLIAM STREET, DUBLIN,

THIS WORK

IS INSCRIBED, BY

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THE present work is a part of a series, and is the first of three historical romances, illustrative of European feelings and manners in ancient times, in middle, and in modern.

Such a series might show the diversities of national and human character, in the chief points of view essential even to graver knowledge. The splendid barbarism of the feudal ages, with their wild superstitions and dubious Christianity, their knightly gallantry and baronial oppression, the native fierceness of the Gothic conqueror, mingled with the levity, bigotry, and baseness of his Italian and Gallic slave, offer powerful materials to the painter of manners with the pen.

The more subtle policy, improved system of government, and commencing diffusion of literature in the second period,—and the still more

enlightened political system, confirmed knowledge, and popular influence, that distinguish times nearer to our own,—give obvious room for all that is picturesque, intelligent, and interesting in description.

How far I may have succeeded, is not for me to judge. I put forwards my present work with diffidence. No one can think more moderately of his powers than I do of mine; but I must demand of my reader's consideration, that the opinions and errors of my imaginary characters shall not be transferred to my own. In what singularly severe and injurious spirit this has been hitherto done, I need not say. No man less disregards public opinion; no man is less disposed to offer an insolent defiance to sincere criticism: but if an unoffending life cannot protect a writer from those dangerous imputations, I disdain defence, and leave them to their judgment by all generous and unprejudiced minds.

THE ALBIGENSES.

CHAPTER I.

A gentle knight came pricking o'er the plain.

SPENSER.

THE crusade undertaken against the Albigenses in the reign of Philip Augustus, in the year 1208, had produced the ~~most~~ decisive results, and had terminated in the almost total extirpation of that people throughout the province of Languedoc. The sack and spoliation of Beziers—the desertion of Carcassone by its inhabitants—the absence of Count Raymond of Toulouse (the ill-fated favourer of the Albigenses), who had gone to Rome to make his peace with the Pope—the death of his nephew, the Count of Beziers—

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and the general terror impressed by the sweeping conquests and terrific cruelties of Count Simon de Monfort, the chief of the armies of the church*, had scarcely, as it was deemed, left a victim for the next crusade. Occasional disturbances, however, soon began to arise, from the unquenchable zeal and proselyting spirit of the few surviving Albigenses; but nothing worthy of record occurs till about the close of the year 1214, when Count Raymond's return from Rome, with the object of his journey unaccomplished, gave pretext to the Pope's legate to hold a council at Montpellier, and proclaim a second crusade against the followers of Waldo. Count Raymond had pleaded his cause before the Pope powerfully; his representations of the cruelty, avarice, and violence of Count Simon de Monfort and the Bishop of Toulouse were supported and corroborated by those of Arnaud de Ville-mur, and Raymond de Roquefeuille, lord of Querci; and the Pope, moved by their remon-

* Champion of the Church, and Head of the Armies of the Church, were the titles bestowed on him by the Pope.

stances, felt disposed to favour them, when, by the advice of some members of the conclave, who dreaded a breach with the Count de Monfort, he was induced to dismiss them with a reference to the legate; couched in terms sufficiently soothing to excite hopes he never meant to realize, and sufficiently indefinite to justify the legate for declining to fulfil them. On their return, therefore, to France, they received from the Pope's representative those evasive answers, and ineffective promises, in which the court of Rome was so well skilled to deal; and, perceiving they had nothing else to expect, prepared once more to take up arms for the recovery of their rights and possessions. The capture of the town or city of Beaucaire was the signal for renewed hostilities on both sides. One hundred bishops preached the crusade throughout Languedoc; and the Count de Monfort, with a splendid train of Italian ecclesiastics, armed with bulls and indulgences, journeyed to Paris to be invested by the King of France with the duchy of Narbonne and the county of Toulouse,

vowing not to leave on his return one heretic alive within the realm of France. This vow was, however, owing to recent circumstances, more easily made than kept; the want of regular forces rendered the event of so protracted a warfare eminently doubtful. The King of France, less powerful than many of his barons, and kept in a state of anxious and restless vigilance by his neighbour, John of England, had been unable or unwilling to afford the slightest assistance to the first crusade. The *Pelerins*, who constituted the main body of the crusading army, were chiefly retained in their ranks by the promise of forty days' indulgence, and paradise if they fell in battle. The former condition appeared the most inviting, as they generally disbanded at the end of the forty days, and took their chance for paradise afterwards.

Finally, King Philip Augustus had good reason to dread the ambition and desperate daring spirit of the Count de Monfort*; and

* "Le Roy d'Aragon escrit au Roy de France, que le Conte Simon de Monfort avoit l'âme bouffie de grandes conceptions,

though, in obedience to the commands of the Pope, he invested him with the duchy of Narbonne and the county of Toulouse, he refused to add a single soldier to the crusading army, and was even suspected of a secret disaffection to the cause, which nothing but his fear of Rome prevented him from testifying more effectively.

Under these inauspicious circumstances, Count Simon, however, succeeded in raising a powerful army, and advanced to the assault of the castle of Monteil-Aimar, held by Guiland, lord of Monteil-Aimar, who, with Aimar de Poitiers, were more than suspected of secretly favouring the cause and persons of the Albigeois. On the other hand, Count Raymond was said to be employed in vigorous, though silent preparation; he was supported by the powerful lords, the Count de Com-

excedens la capacité de son sens, et de ses forces; que toutes ses intentions n'estoient que plastres du pretexte de religion; et cependant qu'il ne tendoit qu'à estre Roy de fait, et Simon de nom."—*Histoire des Vaudois, par JEAN PAUL PERRIN, Lionnois.*

minges, Gaspard de la Barre, Enguerand de Gordo, lord of Caraman, and Estephe de la Vallette, whom an old historian describes as *tous braves, vaillans, et bien accompagnés*; and, in spite of all his wrongs and his misfortunes, he had a dependence on the hearts, fealty, and indomitable spirit of the Albigeois, which the leaders of *l'armée de l'Eglise* could scarcely place in the desultory, tumultuous, and excursive bands of the Pelerins.

The castle of Monteil-Aimar held out against the forces of the crusaders; the preparations of Count Raymond were becoming formidable, less, perhaps, from their vigour than from their secrecy; and thus the affairs of the Albigeois began to assume an aspect of doubtful and latent hope, when Count Raymond, in the year 1216, took one of those steps which marked the vacillating and *unreliable* character which cotemporary and succeeding historians have ascribed to him alike in politics, warfare, and ecclesiastical negotiations:—he abandoned his warlike preparations, and set out once more to seek reconciliation with the

Pope; while Count Simon, wearied and ashamed of exhausting his time and forces under the walls of Monteil-Aimar, availed himself of the intelligence that the castle of a noble crusader was invested by a band of the Albigenses, to draw off his troops, and haste to the aid of the beleaguered fortress. It was the castle of the lord of Courtenaye and Beaurevoir, the most powerful and wealthy baron in all Languedoc, and a zealous persecutor of the Albigenses, it was said, less from zeal for the cause of the church, than from dread of her castigations; for he was reported to be deeply attached to the pursuit of knowledge forbidden to man, and justly denounced by the church as impious and damnable.

It was said that a numerous body of the Albigenses (who had effected their subterranean escape from Carcassone under circumstances which, though historically attested, have all the air of romance, and had since concealed themselves in the woods and mountains,) had at length, stimulated by want, and confident by numbers, rushed forth from their

hiding place to force their way to the dominions of the King of Arragon, whom personal hostility to the Count de Monfort had rendered more propitious to the Albigeois than the orthodoxy of his creed warranted; and the castle of Courtenaye obstructing their progress, they had invested and attacked it.

The Count de Monfort, who well knew that these wretched people, so far from being furnished with means to carry on a siege, (an undertaking requiring at that period disciplined forces, and complicated and ponderous machinery,) were not able to oppose any thing in the field but their clubs, arrows, and woollen garments, to the lances, swords, and complete armour of the crusaders, laughed secretly at the terrors of the Lord of Courtenaye, while he availed himself of the pretext they gave him to raise the unsuccessful siege of Monteil-Aimar. Of the Lord of Courtenaye we have not at this period of our story much to tell—save that he avenged himself on his inferiors for the general disdain and derision of his equals. The deformity of his person, and

the weakness of his constitution, rendered him incapable of bearing arms from his infancy: it was even said, according to an opprobrious proverbial formula of that country, that "had he lacked a pigeon for his breakfast, the craven could not have hit it with a bird-bolt." This inefficiency, which exposed him so much to the disdain of the warlike age in which he lived, he tried to balance by the strictest severity of feudal discipline within his castle, and the fiercest rigour of feudal tyranny throughout his vast domains; but neither could protect him against the terror inspired by the approach of the Albigenses; and he continued to urge, by missive overtaking missive, the Count de Monfort and the Bishop of Toulouse to speed to his assistance. Some said that the Lord of Courtenaye was more jealous of his niece, the Lady Isabelle, heiress of Courtenaye and Beaurevoir (on whose continuing unmarried his state and wealth depended), than of the catholic faith; and that, provided he could keep her suitors at a distance, he cared little how near the Albigeois might be: they were

mistaken ; the Lord of Courtenaye, however he might pique himself on his duplicity in other matters, was always profoundly sincere in his cowardice.

The Count and the Bishop, a warlike prelate of that age, were advancing with their band of Pelerins to the defence of the castle, and their numbers were perpetually increasing with their progress ; the announcement of the new crusade, and the report of the heretics having had the insolence to assault the castle of a crusading baron, had collected a number of military adventurers, (chiefly single knights, with their small trains of men-at-arms,) who poured in from every province in France, all eager to break a spear in honour of the church,—all sure of winning heaven by dipping their lance-point in the blood of its enemies.

Under the circumstances of the times which we have thus attempted to sketch, our readers will not be surprised if we thus abruptly introduce to them a solitary knight, mounted on his war-steed, and attended by a person who,

without assuming the rank of squire or page, fulfilled occasionally the offices of both. The scenery, from its air of deep solitude, was well suited to the lonely appearance of the two passengers. No painter could imagine a background of richer darkness or more profound repose, or give a stronger outline and character to the figures in front, than did the evening sky and dark heath over which they were advancing.

The knight and his attendant, after a long day's journey without rest or refreshment, (for they had neither encountered hostel, town, nor castle in their way,) had now entered on a wild *lande* or heath, wild as ever was trod by the "brogued feet"* of highland hunter, or "rough Irish kerne." The wars in Languedoc had left many parts of the country almost desert, and the province was, moreover, at this time, from various circumstances resulting from the operation of the feudal system, partitioned into vast tracts of heath, (deserted from the checked and depressed spirit of agriculture, or from

* Family Feuds.—MISS BAILLIE.

their being infested by hordes of robbers or gipsies, then almost as formidable,) slips of arable or of pasture ground in the immediate vicinity of towns, or cultivated lands situated close to the castles of powerful barons.

On such a heath our knight and his attendant appeared in an evening in the autumn of the year 1216. It was about the beginning of September; the sun had set, but there was a broad bright band of gold round the western heaven that powerfully contrasted the darkness of the upper sky, and the deep shade that had fallen upon the face of the earth;—the heath lay wide, brown, and unbroken around and before the travellers to the utmost verge of the horizon, and on its whole extent there was not to be discovered living or moving thing, or trace of human habitation, or aught else to break the perfect loneliness of the view, save the two silently advancing figures;—the deep moss with which the heath was covered scarce permitting the heavy tread of their steeds to be heard by the riders,—while the forms of each seemed dilated to the dimensions of a giant,

from the circumstance of their being alone on the wide scene, and strongly defined on that golden light whose fading richness flushed the western sky.

The first figure rode far before his companion, so as almost to be alone. He seemed in the vigorous prime of adolescence, just at that period when the slender and flexile graces of youth are strengthening into the marked and muscular symmetry of perfect manhood. He was in armour from throat to heel, but it was of a construction that rather displayed than concealed the exquisite proportions of his form; it was formed of that *complete* mail used in those days, composed of innumerable rings of steel, as intricately arranged as those of a modern steel purse, and, from its extreme elasticity and flexibility, possessing a power of adaptation the nicest and most faithful to the human form. The modulation of the finely-turned knee, the taper limb, and slender ancle, were as perceptible through it as if they were veiled only by the light texture of modern drapery. This armour covered the entire

person, including even the feet; on the hand it was divided at the thumb, but enclosed the fingers to the very tips; it was also furnished with a hood or shirt (as it was called) of the same construction, which in battle was drawn over the helmet, and on other occasions was, as on the present, flung back and hung on the shoulders, producing no ungraceful effect.

In his right hand the knight bore a lance, which was held loosely, as in the hand of one unconscious of the burthen. On his left arm hung his shield, of the singular half-cylindrical shape used at that period, the sides being so bent in as to give the bearer the appearance of being defended by a tower on the left side; it bore for device a moon over which a cloud was passing, with the motto, *Lucet dum latet*. Below was a bloody cross, allusive to the exploit from whence Sir Paladour de la Croix Sanglante had derived his title and his fame. At his saddle-bow, as he rode, hung his ponderous gisarme, and his helmet of the uncouth and tub-like fashion then in use, and which a

cotemporary writer describes not unaptly as "*lebes inversus*." Over his shoulders fell in ample folds a mantle of the richest scarlet, the cross on which, transferred from the shoulder to the breast, announced that the warrior was devoted to the crusade, not against pagans, but heretics.

The knight's head was covered only by a barrel cap, without jewel, plume, or favour, which did not conceal the dark luxuriance of his curled chesnut locks; and his features, thus exposed, displayed that perfect beauty, to which imagination or art would vainly, in copying them, have added tint or touch: they were such as might have visited the inspired dreams of a classic sculptor, haunted by the godlike images of "the fair humanities of old religion," the deity of Delos, or the son of Maia. The slight degree of unmanliness which the rose-leaf tint of the cheek, and the "riper and more lusty red" of the small mouth, gave to his contour, was corrected by the commanding character of his noble profile, the shade of his dark hair, and short but thickly

curled beard, and a brow, on whose broad expanse thought seemed to sit as enthroned.

Yet over that brow hung a cloud, whose elements, unanalysed and unknown to the sufferer himself, lay brooding there like the thunder-clouds that gather in the glorious west of the summer evening-sky; and the smile of the eye and lip that nature had shed her brightest radiance and roses on, made strange contrast with the storm that scowled and blackened above. The unfortunate youth was conscious when this expression began to settle on his features, for it was accompanied by an undefinable feeling that had haunted him from childhood, and which he felt must one day determine his mortal destiny;—dim traces of past events, effaced resolutions and forgotten struggles, lay like a mass of ruins in his memory; but, amid these ruins, the image of a terrible vow stalked forth like a tenanting spectre, and, while all else of the past lay obscure, colourless, and dream-like, forced itself on the mind's eye with the hideous vividness of distinct and vital reality. The

recurrence of this image was attended from his childhood upward by increasing horror—with the expansion of his faculties the image seemed to expand, and the burthen to increase, till it was becoming too much for reason to endure. The hour of his visitation was on him now; he passed his hand twice or thrice across his forehead, and then, unable to master the rising fiend, called with a quick and eager voice to his attendant to join him, whose ill-favoured visage bore a sinister expression of timidity, cunning, and affected vacancy. The attendant complied, with shrugged shoulders, up-turned eyes, and that mixed expression of deference and derision which a crafty domestic assumes, conscious that his cunning is more than a match for his master's power or anger. "Where are we now, knave?" demanded the knight.

"Upon a lone heath, without the vestige of human habitation, or the trace of human foot, or the mark of man or beast to guide us," quoth the attendant, looking leisurely around him, as if he had been merely required

to give a topographical sketch of the spot where they stood.

"If I lacked the track of a beast to guide me," said the knight impatiently, "I would surely have bid thee lead the way."

"Your knightship forgets," said the squire doggedly, "that we are warned ever to eschew the *mark of the beast*,"—(the term applied by the catholics to the professors of the heretical religion, and which was retaliated by the reformers on the catholics three hundred years afterwards with equal felicity of allusion and acrimony of retort.)

"Truce with thy buffoonery," said the knight, checking his steed, "and tell me truly, if thou knowest, where we be; this heath seems to spread before us, as we advance—the night is gathering round us—and I am all uncertain of the track we are pursuing."

Before the knight had ceased to speak, the squire disappeared; and the former, striking his lance in the earth, rested on it for a few moments, like one who sought forgetfulness of himself and of all around him, when the

attendant suddenly came galloping back, tossing his meagre arms, and shouting at the top of his shrill voice, "I have found it—I have found it."

"What hast thou found?" said the knight, snatching his lance from the ground.

"Only, that we have lost our way," said the squire, dropping his arms, elevating his eye-brows, and standing before his master with that ineffable expression of mingled stolidity and cunning which he had generally found available in averting the anger which his humour, at once shy and mischievous, sullen and caustic, seldom failed to incur, often to the hazard of his misshapen bones. On this occasion the experiment was once more successful, and the knight changed his humour of anger for one of laughter.

As they continued to ride on in anxious uncertainty, the scene began somewhat to vary, and some features of diversified landscape appeared dimly in the departing twilight. "Shall we betake ourselves," said the knight, "to yonder wood on the left? Its darkly-tinted

mass," he cried, gazing on it, "seems like an assembled host waiting the leader's war-word — now, as the breeze rises, the foremost branches bend and float like standards in the van, and that dense and serried mass in the rear stands like a noble harvest for the sword to reap—shall we thither, knave?"

"Yea, marry," said the squire; "and the rather, because men say there be as many wolves as leaves in that wood; and what rent their fangs and claws may make in that goodly shield and mail of price, I leave to God, your knightship, and the armourer; in whose danger*," lowering his voice, "perchance you stand for their value."

"What think'st thou," said the knight, pausing, "shall we hie us to those hills on the right?—such, methinks, was the track the Pelerins pointed out to us."

"Perchance so," quoth the squire, "because they know them to be haunted by a sort of bears, and peradventure they are so jealous of your bearing away the honours of

* Stand in danger, i. e. are in debt.

the crusade against those heretics, that they would first send you to tilt against their brethren of the hill and cavern by way of essay ; — take my counsel, valiant knight, and rather encounter the dint of fifty of those rascal-heretics' clubs on your crest, than the fangs of a dozen bears in your flesh ; — Heaven pardon me, but I could hardly chide them for comforting their bowels as they might, when I feel the ravage grief and emptiness are making in mine own."

" Thou hast not fasted longer than thy master, I trow," said the knight.

" All's one for that," rejoined the squire ; " your knight's stomach is all for fighting, your squire's for fare wholly more nutritious, digestible, and Christian-like ; marry, there is also a huge difference in their capacity as in their taste ; your knight can break his fast on a tournament, dine heartily on a battle, sup lightly on a duello, and sleep on the siege of a castle or two, and then (insatiable as he is !) whimper for the lack of similar dainties for a month to come ; while your squire, Heaven

help! needs no more than four meals a day, with contingencies—and when his stomach hath rung matins, noon, and vespers, to some forty pounds of beef or boar's flesh, moated with brewis, flanked with capons, and gallantly guarded with rosemary and bays, he thinks, in the moderation of his spirit, of nothing more than to pray to his Saint Venter, that his devotions may be paid at the same shrine every quarter—of an hour.”

While the squire was thus delivering himself, the knight caught the glimpse of several figures passing swiftly along the verge of the heath;—the increasing darkness, and the speed with which they rode, preventing his discovering whether they were armed or not; at the same moment, but by very different instincts, the knight spurred forward, and the attendant after, so closely as almost to thrust the nose of his jade among the bases of the richly caparisoned war-steed. “See'st thou yonder group?” asked his master. “Of them I may learn my way, or perchance join them in

theirs." Then turning to the attendant—
"I wot not what may be the issue of this encounter, or when we may again meet—hast thou any provision, poor knave?"

"A quarter of kid and a loaf of buck-wheat, that I bought of a peasant while your knightship was at shrift this morning—poor viands, and all unfit for knightly food. Would I had the secret of that widow of Zarephath, of whom I have heard monks tell, though the close fathers would never confess in what part of France she sojourned."

"Thou art not then unprovided for; and for myself I reck not," said the knight, dashing his heavy spurs into his steed, and disappearing in a moment. The feelings of the unfortunate squire, distracted between the wish to enjoy his meal undivided, and his terror at being thus suddenly deserted, broke forth in the following exclamations.

"Hear, sir knight, hear me!—in the name of all the saints or all the devils, will you run a tilt against (it may be) a host of spirits that haunt this heath?—By the mass, an' I have

not a mind to devour the whole quarter for mere vexation, I am no true squire—and a morsel might refresh me!—Turn back, I say, sir knight,” (here his exclamations became evidently fainter)—“ah, foul befall thee, losel squire, who pamperest thyself when thy master is in peril!—now the fiend ha’ me if I swallow another morsel—save this, to give me strength to cry after him!—Nay, now my mouth is so full, it is in vain to strive—he will never, never,” said the squire with a sigh, “return to taste a morsel of it—so it were better briefly to discuss what remains, than leave it, perchance, to be the prey of these accursed heretics.”

While the attendant was thus vociferating gradually *in diminuendo*, and masticating *in crescendo*, the knight rode across the heath, and prepared himself to accost the group he was approaching. In spite of the increasing darkness, he could observe, as he drew near them, one of distinguished figure, who by his gestures seemed about to dismiss a numerous body of attendants, and to prepare to ride

alone. There was something awful and even ghostly in the appearance of this shadowy group, who parted at the signal of their leader in perfect silence, the deep moss of the heath rendering their horse-tramp scarce distinguishable even amid profound stillness. They divided, part wheeling to the right, part to the left, like broken masses of the heavy evening clouds, and the knight and the stranger were left alone on the heath; the latter still continuing to extend his arm in the direction his band were now faintly seen pursuing.

CHAPTER II.

Ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, πολυτρόπον.

As Sir Paladour approached the stranger, the latter wrapt himself in the folds of a vast houpland, which covered even the flanks of his horse, and, drawing his barret over his face, seemed wishing to render his person wholly undistinguishable. To the inquiries of the knight, however, he prepared to return an answer; especially when the inquirer added, "Methinks the band of Pelerins of whom I sought my way this morn have shown me aught but the right one."

"So do they with many," said the stranger in a disguised voice, and evidently with a deeper meaning than his words at first seemed to bear—"so do they with many—it is their use; meanwhile, sir crusader, (for such I deem you;)

your courtesy enforces me to teach you what otherwise I might withhold. Your way to the castle of Courtenaye lieth right onward, yet may you hardly reach it by to-morrow's night; and in your way, if I remember me, there is a lake, over which I doubt that you will find bark or boat to waft you at this hour."

"Sir traveller," said the Paladour, "thou knowest, that to place peril in the path of a true knight, is to determine his choice of that path, were a thousand courting him to safety."

"There is more than you wot of, perchance," said the traveller. "Men say—I vouch not for the tale—that at midnight a female form appears on the lake, and beckons belated travellers to her bark, promising to waft them over with all swiftness and security; but of those who embarked, none within mortal memory ever reached the other side."

"Of earthly might I reckon not," said the knight after a pause, "and unearthly I defy, having this morn been shriven by a holy recluse who dwelt in a rock, being of the order

of St. Simeon Stylites*, the odour of whose sanctity hath reached hither even from the shores of Egypt, where God's people sojourned of old."

"And thus prepared, thou art most fit to join the band of the crusaders," said the stranger, with a peculiar expression. "Go," he added — "go, and add one more to the countless and causeless enemies of the unfortunate Raymond of Toulouse. — Forbear thy thanks," he continued, interrupting Sir Paladour; "forbear them till thou meet Count Raymond in the field; to him I refer thy debt of obligation. Pay him not with thy words, but thy deeds; and look they be the boldest thine arm ever wrought, or I shall hold thee still my debtor."

"Oh, that the hour were come!" exclaimed Paladour, while his steed, as if participating in his rider's feeling, reared and pawed the earth; "my lance should pierce more deeply into his false heart than did ever the lash of the legate Millon into his flesh when he did

* Vide Gibbon.

penance for the slaughter of the holy preacher and martyr Chateauneuf*."

"Perchance," said the stranger, in a voice still more subdued, "he had before received a wound, in whose anguish that of all others was forgotten; before the legate's lash had marked

* I transcribe the following horrors; they are well authenticated. The spelling is very obsolete:—

"Mais ce qui plus les affligeoit, c'est qu'ils virent conduire le Conte Remond à Saint Giles, où il fut reconcilié au Pape et à l'église avec les qui suivent. C'est que le legat commanda au dit Conte Remond de se despoiller tout nud hors l'église de Saint Giles, ayant seulement des calçons de toile. Au reste pieds nuds, teste nue, et les epaules— puis il luy mit une estolle au col, et le trainant par ladite estolle, il luy fit faire neuf tours autour de la fosse de feu frere Pierre de Chateauneuf, lequel avoit este enséveli en la dite eglise, et le fouëttat de verges que le dit legat avoit en sa main pendant qu'il tournoyot la dite sepulture. Le Conte Remond protesta de cette extraordinaire penitence pour un peché qu'il n'avoit point commis, car il n'avoit point tué le dit moyne. Le legat respondit qu'encor qu'il ne l'eust tué ni fait tuer, que parce que ce meurtre s'estoit fait dans ses terres, et qu'il n'en avoit fait aucune poursuite, ce meurtre luy estoit meritoirement imputé et partant qu'il devoit satisfaire au Pape et à l'église par ceste humble repentance, s'il desiroit estre reconcilié à l'un et à l'autre. Il falut donc estre fouëtté, et en outre es presences des contes, barons, marquis, prelates, et quantité de peuples."

his flesh, a deeper one had torn his heart—he had lost two fair sons.”

The knight, confounded at this appearance of compassion for a heretic, indignantly reined up his steed, and exclaimed, “Art thou then a fautor of that arch-heretic—and have I rode in peace by the side of one who upholds him?”

“No, so save me Heaven,” said the stranger solemnly, “as I know not a more deadly enemy to Raymond of Toulouse than him with whom thou talkest; all other foes but *me* he might have defied—but what is thy cause of quarrel, youth, to him?”

“Askest thou the cause of quarrel,” interrupted Paladour, “between a champion of holy church, and the mortal foe of her faith and her fold?”

“True—I had forgot,” said the stranger, acquiescing. After a long pause, which neither of them (now alike mysteriously suspicious each of the other) seemed inclined to break, the stranger spoke: “Art thou lettered, sir knight?” said he.

"I skill somewhat of the learned tongues," said Paladour, blushing at the avowal of an acquirement then held to be the exclusive accomplishment of the 'book-bosomed priest.'

"Then thou hast perchance read of a wight in antique story, surnamed the Just?" said the stranger.

"He was a Greek," replied the knight; "his name, I take it, was Aristides."

"Clerks tell of this Aristides," rejoined the stranger; "that, when he was about to be banished by his enemies, a rustical man prayed him to write his name on the shell of banishment, avouching that the branch of his hatred sprung from no deeper root than his jealous weariness of hearing him ever named the Just. It is said of this Count Raymond, that he is noble and pitiful—courteous to his peers, and fulfilled with all gentleness to his vassals and subjects."

"Men speak him so," said Paladour.

"And wilt *thou* sign his sentence too?" asked the stranger.

“He is the enemy of God, and therefore mine,” replied the knight.

“Farewell, sir knight,” said the stranger, who appeared unwilling to trust himself with further parley; “perchance, ere long, Count Raymond may defy thee to make good the boast thou hast this night uttered.”

“To the bounds of Christendom, and at peril of my life,” exclaimed the youth, “I trust in the good cause for which I combat, that I shall pierce the arch-heretic’s heart, were my lance a reed, and he in panoply of adamant.”

“So wouldst thou do him most acceptable service,” said the stranger; “he is one who would rather feel the lance of a knight in his bosom, than the lash of a monk on his shoulder.” Thus saying, the stranger clapped spurs to his steed; his parting form was seen for a moment through the mist, and then lost.

As the knight rode slowly on in the direction indicated by the stranger, the scene became wilder, and the night more gloomy;—it was one of those nights so rare on the

continent, which recall the image of the sad and troubled atmosphere of the north, where masses of dark-grey cloud, with a few gleams of pale and dusky white, pursue each other incessantly, and make the sky appear like a dark and agitated ocean suspended over our heads. The objects around were now scarcely distinguishable; but by the sound of waters the knight perceived he approached the lake, and, alighting, he led his steed cautiously.

The gleams of a struggling and watery moon broke forth at that moment, and he found himself on the border of a lake of some extent, enclosed by rocky hills on every side, save that by which he had approached it. A breeze, whose sound was multiplied by the echoes of the shore, swept over its dark surface, and sent its waves with hoarse and heavy murmurs to his feet. Amid the hills were a few huts, and an aged fisherman was hauling his crazy boat on shore. At the sight of a knight in armour leading his steed, the old man was about to fly; but, reassured by the tones of Paladour's voice, he remained,

though visibly with reluctance. The gift of a few liards assuaged his fears, and the natural anxiety of solitude for the relief of human intercourse soon made him communicative.

Shaking his head at the desolation around him, he began to tell, that, till lately, the fishery of the lake had supported the inhabitants of the neighbouring huts, who were accustomed to sell its produce chiefly to the Lord of Courtenaye, and the wealthy abbot of Normoutier;—that, within the last two months, a female form had appeared, rowing a bark along the shores of the lake, the terror of whose presence had prevented the boldest fishermen from venturing out, and the little community was thus reduced to poverty. She never spoke to any of the peasantry, but was sometimes heard talking, or rather chanting, to herself. She never debarked, but was seen by some whom fear or curiosity kept awake to watch her, rowing whole nights close to the shore, and apparently waiting with anxiety for some one whom she was to waft over.

When a knight or armed man arrived at the

lake, she eagerly offered her services ; but of those who accepted them, it was said that not one had ever reached the other side. A holy and intrepid monk had once ventured to address her as she lay resting on her oar beneath the shadow of a rock in the twilight ; but he soon shrunk from the conference in horror, and declared afterwards, that he must do deep penance to clear him from the sin of listening to the words he had heard.

The knight, whose strong faculties struggled with the credulity of that dark age, demanded if the fisherman indeed believed that a being, human in form and action, could exercise such deadly operations on the elements and their inhabitants. "For what cause," said the old man, "did my net break this morning — and my strong line, when I cast it, float on the surface like a rush, as if it were flung there to catch water-flies withal ?" And he sat down sullenly among his broken nets, as if doubting of what use it was to repair them.

"The night wanes, and I must win yonder shore ere midnight," said the youth ; "bear

me thither in safety, old man, and I will requite thee like a knight."

"Not for the ransom of a crusader," said the fisherman; "against such encounter the mail of a knight is of as light avail as the dank and sorry weeds of the fisherman—as thou thyself shalt prove, an' thou tarry longer," he added, pointing with his trembling hand to what seemed a swell on the distant surface of the lake, but, as it approached, appeared to be a boat rowed by a female form.

Sir Paladour watched its approach in silence; he counted every stroke of the oar, of which the sound seemed to smite on his heart. The female pursued her task silently, but with increasing force, and in a few moments her oar sent the spray dashing against the stony bank on which stood Sir Paladour, his arm wreathed in the mane of his war-steed.

"Embark, sir knight, and come with me," were her first words; "the boat is launched—the sail is set—the oar is feathering the surge. Long have I wandered on this lonely shore, and all for thee—embark, then, and come;

your passage shall be swift, and your welcome fair on yonder shore. Many await you there; and I bear a charge to waft you to them."

"Jesu preserve him who trusts to your pilotage!" muttered the old fisherman, who at first had retired to some distance, but still continued to linger without departing. While he spoke, a gleam of moonlight gave Sir Paladour a view of the figure who addressed him. Instead of the witch-like and haggard features he had expected to see, the glimpse he had of her lineaments showed them to be noble and majestic, suited to her lofty stature, but discoloured by an unnatural paleness; her dress was that of a peasant, a tunic and mantle of woollen cloth; but she wore it not like a peasant; her hair, grey, but of a remarkable length, floated on her shoulders. She stood upright in the boat, resting one arm on the oar, and waving the other with a gesture of lofty invitation to Paladour.

It was impossible to look on this singular being, seeming a creature of the elements, sailing for ever under the clouds of night,

and apparently dwelling on the dark waters, without deeming her something "not of this world." There seemed, too, a power of fascination in her silent look; for the knight, as he viewed her, felt himself impelled towards the bark.

"Now go not with her, sir knight, in the name of heaven," cried the old man—"go not, as you dread body's scathe and soul's peril."

This adjuration was strengthened by the cries of another voice; it was that of his squire, who came on galloping at full speed, and exclaiming, "Turn back, sir knight—wherefore should you be so wilful to wend with the fiend?—turn back, in the name of all holy saints!—Would that you were as well learned in their lives and legends as in those lying scrolls of troubadours, more apocryphal than my grandame's winter tales, that send you madding after these misadventures, to the perilling of your soul, and the manifest discomfiture of your forlorn"—

"Had you no warning of danger," said the

old man, "ere now?" laying his hand on the reins of Sir Paladour's steed.

"I remember somewhat," said the knight, musing—"but all uncertainly; what was that the traveller told as we rode by the way?"

"The traveller was the devil, and yonder ill-fared* hag is doubtless his dam," interjected the squire.

"Ill-fared!" repeated the female, the awful and ruined majesty of whose figure seemed to dilate in the moonlight—"ill-fared!—was it so once?—or was the past a dream, and is the present a lie?—Yet, well it may be—evil passions do upon our frame more deadly work than time or distemperature; and the greenest tree of the forest, when scathed by the lightning, becomes a gnarled and unsightly stump."

"Lo you now, what a captious spirit!" quoth the squire—"a most delicate and exceptionable devil! my rosary to a handful of acorns but it is a female fiend—she can bear to be called the devil without wincing—marry, the word 'ill-fared' galls her shrewdly."

* Forsan, ill-favoured.

CHAPTER III.

There was saddling and mounting in haste,
There was pricking o'er moor and lea.

SCOTT.

WE must now hasten to the scene and company that Sir Paladour was speeding to join, and introduce the reader to the spot where various parties of the crusaders were assembling in detached and irregular bands, suitably to that desultory and unorganised system of warfare which formed one of the most striking characteristics of that period. The country, for many a league round the castle of Courtenaye, was all alive with military preparations; and though reports hourly arrived that not an heretic had yet appeared beneath its walls, the crusaders continued to press forward with unabated speed. Here were to be seen the lords

and barons of Languedoc arraying their men-at-arms, in rescue of one whom, though they despised as an ally, they dreaded as a dark and potent enemy ;—young knights who had mortgaged their lands to purchase gaudy and gilded coats for themselves and their followers, to win favour in the eyes of the lady of the castle ;—troops of engineers, their huge wains groaning under the weight of mangonels and arbalists, or guiding on wheels their catapults and war-wolves, and all that “ devilish enginery,” which anticipated, before its invention, the most destructive effects of gunpowder ;—straggling troops of Pelerins, the wandering condottieri of that war, with cross shifted from the shoulder to the breast ;—and troops of ecclesiastics, regular as well as secular, with crucifix and banner, fairly displayed, chanting aloud the “ Exsurgat Dominus ” amid the deafening hum of martial preparation,—fierce contention often arising between these two classes, the latter threatening to shut the gates of Paradise against the contumacious, and the former menacing to withhold the aid of the arm of

flesh, and leave the churchmen to wage rosary and crucifix against the clubs and arrows of the heretics. These were generally appeased by the *Bonnibelles*, who followed this tumultuary array in competent numbers, and were most frequently the objects of contention themselves. Nor were there lacking in flank and rear of the crusading army bands of minstrels and mimes, furnished with all the dissoluteness, poverty, cunning, and amusive powers, which were then, and still are, "the badge of all their tribe." Now, harping to knights and nobles in their silken pavilions,—now vainly trying to woo the ear of a village churl,—now caressed, and now spurned, always necessary, yet always contemptible, with hearts as light as their purses, and a good-humoured vanity, making them ample satisfaction for all scorn and wrongs,—they lived that life of exigencies and extremes that seems to the individual himself something unreal and dramatic; as if he were *acting* a life, not living one,—the very excitement constituting its wild charm, and its perils and privations possessing an

interest denied to the homely monotony of every-day existence. Such was the army and array of the crusaders.

It was the night following that on which Sir Paladour had been encountered on the heath, that, in the van of this tumultuous band, there came riding on three distinguished crusaders, who, though pursuing the same direction towards the castle of Courtenaye, seemed, by the slowness of their pace, and easy lightness of their conversation, either much to doubt the danger which menaced its lord, or wholly to disregard it. This group consisted of the Bishop of Toulouse, a conspicuous character in that age,—an old knight, Sir Aymer du Chastelroi, and a young one, who rode beside him in silence. The bishop led a numerous band of men-at-arms, amply appointed; in their van rode a body of priests, one of whom sustained the weight of his vast crosier, and the other his banner, emblazoned with the mitre, and bearing the motto of the crusaders, *Dieu et l'Eglise*, wrought in gold. Close behind him was a confessor, mounted

on a goodly mule, and telling his beads; while two pages on foot led the prelate's war-steed, the noble animal champing and rearing, as if he longed for an armed weight to press his loins, and already "smelled the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains and the shouting." His master seemed to share his impatience, often looking back on the fiery force he hoped ere long to bestride in battle, and which, in truth, none save himself seemed able to guide or to command. He had that marked and regular, but chilling physiognomy, which seems rather that of a statue than of a breathing man,—an impression which was strengthened by the gigantic proportions of his figure, the immobility of his iron features, and the stern repose of his large commanding eye. He was arrayed less according to the military costume of the age, than to his own ideas of ecclesiastical chivalry. He disdained the aid of the defensive armour allotted at that period to the higher classes exclusively; he wore neither hose nor shirt of mail, but a corslet laced over a well-quilted gambazon.

He had also cuisses and greaves of polished and ponderous steel; and at first sight it would have been difficult to distinguish the warlike prelate from a man fully armed, but for the magnificent and jewelled cope which he wore on his head; while his helmet hung at his saddle-bow, or was occasionally given to a priest to bear, who received it as reverently as he would a relic.

Combining in his single person all the physical powers that were the requisites of the stormy age in which he lived, with all the mental energies that make themselves known and felt in every age, the Bishop of Toulouse presented to the eye all that is imposing and magnificent—to the mind all that is overpowering and formidable—a man of power and might, body and soul, whose strong mind clung to his strong frame like the human part of the centaur of old to the animal part, making but *one* between them; the former urging and directing the latter, and the latter seconding the mighty impulses of the former with a force that seemed instinctive and connatural. Beside the bishop rode the

brave old merry knight, Sir Aymer du Chastelroi. He was in armour, but had his helmet doffed for ease; and his bald forehead, grey locks, and lank cheeks, were strongly contrasted with the laughter of his blue glittering eye, and the curl about his lip, sometimes sarcastic, always jocular.

The firm seat he kept on his war-steed, (which he disdained to change for a pacing palfrey) and the ease and address with which he wore his heavy harness, proved him a knight "not dubbed on carpet consideration, and with unhacked rapier," but one who, though in advanced years, "at their own play, could foil a dozen would-be's of the day." The brave old knight had stirred himself in his tower, like a veteran war-steed in his stall at the sound of the trumpet, on the intelligence that the castle of Courtenaye had been invested by the heretics; and set out at the head of fifty men-at-arms (the appointed complement of a knight); but through his sympathy with young bloods, or his condonation for old — the placket the former loitered for, or the pullen the latter, coveted,

the good knight seldom rode with more than fifteen out of fifty of his company; yet he never gave them word of rebuke, jestingly overpassing the one, and but coldly chiding the other. The youthful knight, his companion, seldom spoke; his head, covered with a profusion of pale golden locks, was generally declined, and he seemed meditating on softer subjects than crusades or sieges. Sometimes, when jocularly addressed by Sir Aymer, whose notion of humour was by no means delicate, he looked up, and, blushing for the effeminate beauty of his features, he touched his budding mustaches, as if anticipating the time when his visage would boast a more martial and manly shade.

As the party rode on, their conversation ran diffusedly as that of men apparently more occupied with the local inconveniencies of their progress than with the object of its termination. "How now, Sir Aymer," cried the bishop, "are we near the castle of this lord of Courtenaye?"

“ I know not well,” replied the knight ; “ for, by the mass, when I enter on a doubtful way towards nightfall, I care not whither my course tends, so it have end at all—hamlet or hovel, tower or town. Many a cherry lip and grey eye* may be found under the woollen hood ; while the white hand you kiss in a castle-hall may take you over the lips for the license.”

“ What ! art thou there still, mad knight ?” quoth the bishop with a smile ; “ still for the placket and coif ?—marry, other pursuit would better befit thy years, and thy vow of chivalry binds thee to aid distressed demoiselles, not to add to their number.”

“ Mine age !” retorted Sir Aymer ; “ many a breast has been prematurely swept by a white beard ere now ; and your snow,” he added, stroking it, “ was ever a close neighbour to your volcano. For my vow as a knight, let it rest with thine, lord, as a churchman ; men say that the Bishop of Toulouse would not

* The colour of beauty in that age.

have sped so fast to the aid of the Lord of Courtenaye, had not the beauty of the Lady Isabelle, his niece, outshone the brightest blazonry on his towers."—The bishop smiled, not unpleased,—“But, reverend lord,” pursued Sir Aymer, “should we fail to reach the castle of Courtenaye to-night, may we not harbour with the Abbot of Normoutier? a festive churchman he, and a hospitable—who will not spare the best of his fare, and the choicest of his wine, to welcome us withal.”

“What!” said the bishop impatiently, “ask hospitality of that mere murderer of languages, against whom the soul of every martyred letter in the alphabet will rise up in judgment at the last day?—Wot ye not, that though he hath scarce Latin to mumble a mass, yet would the fool be learned, and he betaketh him to a cunning priest, praying him for certain phrases of the Latin tongue to grace his speech withal; and sir priest, in a witty spleen, teacheth him phrases clean contrary to the meaning he seeketh to convey; so that he cannot utter his reasons in plain language, if they be not tagged

with some remnants of ill-assorted Latin. By the bones of St. Benedict, the founder of his rule, I had rather couch on the heath, than on the softest bed in the abbey of Normoutier. I would dream all night of the dispersion at Babel, or wake to be haunted by the ghost of some basely murdered quotation. Was it not, as we went on pilgrimage to holy St. John of Beaucaire, in honour of the martyr Chateaufort, that he broke forth with, How now, my fellow-pilgrims, what talk shall we beguile the way withal? for, as a father saith, *loquendi homines magistros habemus, tacendi Deos*”—

“That breaks no squares,” said Sir Aymer, affecting to listen as if he understood him—“that breaks no squares with a loreless knight, though it may with a lettered churchman—that my lord the abbot’s saws shall be found of light digestion when swallowed along with his rich viands—what say you, Sir Amiral, to our choice of harbourage for the night?”

“That I had rather kneel to receive the bishop’s lance in my bosom at the gates of Normoutier, than his benison in the halls of

Courtenaye," said the youth, with an emotion that made strange contrast with his silvery voice and boyish features.

"How now, sir boy!" said the ancient knight, laughing, "art thou such a heretic in love that thou speakest thus of the walls that enshrine the very saint of beauty, the dame sans peer, the Lady Isabelle?"

"She hath been a good mistress to me," answered the youth in a subdued voice—"a noble and a gentle—and to save one golden hair of her head from shredding," ('Her hair is brown,' muttered Sir Aymer,) "I would pour my heart's last prayer, my heart's best blood."

"Nay, I wage my knighthood, spurs and all," said Sir Aymer, "that we win him yet within the towers of Courtenaye; and to prove that I am master of the spell, I will conjure in a name less potent than that of Lady Isabelle. Hear, thou recreant to beauty; were the castle of Courtenaye this moment invested by the heretics, headed by that incarnate devil, Raymond of Toulouse—were the barbican won,

the moat crossed—every loop-hole filled with shot from arrow and arbalist—tower and bastion rocking with the blows of war-wolves—every pinnacle and battlement ablaze with wild-fire and burning darts—whom wouldst thou plunge amid the burning ruin to save?”

“The Lord of Courtenaye,” answered the youth, with a fierce but generous pride; “and as I bore his cankered and worthless body through the flames, I would whisper to him, ‘I swore to be avenged of thee, and I am!’”

“Well sung, young cockerel of no dunghill brood!” quoth Sir Aymer; “thou wilt one day crow that all France shall hear thee.”

“What hath been the youthful knight’s wrong?” said the prelate, half excited by the emotion of Sir Amirald, who now, apparently ashamed of betraying, or struggling to subdue it, rode apart.

“Marry, an old tale, my lord,” said Sir Aymer—“the mere burthen of a minstrel’s ditty—how a page loved to kiss my lady’s hand better than her pantoffle—how he was there-upon sentenced to the discipline of the porter’s

lodge—how he resisted—how my lady prayed—how—but, *infandum, regina, jubes renovare dolorem.*”

“ Reserve it then till I am more in the mood of condolence,” said the bishop, whose eye had caught another figure through the increasing gloom; “ for I would first gladly learn whether he who approaches through the darkness be friend or foe. I heard his horse-tramp on the heath long ere I beheld him.”

As he spoke, the stately figure of a knight, completely armed, approached them; and the shade could no longer conceal the lofty grandeur of his air, or the martial splendour of his furniture.

“ Now, by'r Lady,” said Sir Aymer, than whom none was better skilled to judge of ‘ the thewes and sinews of a man,’—“ Now, by'r Lady, a knightly presence and a noble—would that he may ride up and join our company !”

While this was said, the knight advanced, and saluted the party with a lofty grace, with which the slight reverence of modern ceremony

would make most vile comparison, and, with his hand raised to the visor of his helm, and his plume almost touching his horse's mane, he demanded of them if they were bound to the same cause and course with himself. His action, as he spoke, made the cross on the breast of his mantle visible; and Sir Aymer, without further explanation, greeted him with the free welcome of the brave. "Welcome, fair sir," he said; "our cause and errand are, without question, the same. We be crusaders, who speed to the aid of the Lord of Courtenaye; we march in ample strength and meet appointment to his rescue—Fie, where be those loitering knaves of mine?" And here the old knight cast an abashed glance on his dispersed and desultory train, ashamed of the license he allowed them, and of himself for allowing it. "My holy lord," he muttered, "I pray you hold the stranger knight in parley while I chide the knaves for their tardiness."

The bishop, meanwhile, was scanning the young crusader as he would a noble animal

whose physical force he was appreciating, or more properly a machine whose momentum he was calculating. "Benedicite!" he said, in his most gracious tones, "journey you with us, sir stranger knight?"

"So your holy lordship pleases," replied the youth.

"It pleaseth us well," answered the prelate; "thou art armed in the cause of holy church, and we are also the soldiers of Christ — ride up beside our rein. Why, here," he cried, in admiration unrepressed, "here is an arm might mow down an heretic host as the fire kindled by our peasants consumes the weeds of the field — a hand that might fell the oak of the forest with a blow — a breast that might meet the flight of a hundred arrows, and shake them from thee like bird-bolts from the pinion of a soaring eagle. Stand up in thy stirrups, sir stranger, and let me view thy might."

The youthful knight obeyed, with a mixture of proud submission and graceful conscious-

ness. He rose upright in his stirrups, poising himself with his lance, and then slowly sunk to his seat, bowing low to the bishop.

"God's mother!" whispered Sir Aymer, who had meanwhile rejoined them, "is he not one in a thousand?"

"Thou wouldst rightlier say, a thousand in one," said the bishop, smiling.

Sir Aymer, who had availed himself of the interruption caused by the stranger's approach to lead the party into the road that conducted to the abbey of Normoutier, was in no mood to contend with the bishop; but, being somewhat of Polonius's taste in topics of conversational amusement, he broke forth ere they had ridden half a mile: "Alas, for a troubadour's tale, or a minstrel's lay, to cheer us as we speed!—or even for that witty parrot who bore the loves of the son of King Antiphanor to the lonely lady of the orchard*. I warrant me, sir stranger, thou couldst unfold some curious and delicate love-tale if thou wouldst;

* Vide l'Histoire des Trouveurs.

but give modesty to the devil (marry, I know no one else will take her,) for a moment—What!—I know thee for a lover and a loyal one; that trick of thy folded arms—that careless tossing of thy reins on thy steed's neck—that smothered sigh that ushers every word—nay, thou art convicted to thy very heart; betake thee to thy confession, and we will share the penance by listening to thy tale—list, young Amirald, and be edified.”

“For a career in the lists of love,” said the stranger, trying to catch the vein of the merry knight, “you shall hold me excused; if I boast not of trophy or prowess— I am one of Dian's knights, and my heart is yet sans impress or device; but if I am summoned before the parliament of love to answer for my treason to its sovereign, I shall doubtless choose for my proxy so gay and loyal a votarist as I deem thee, sir knight.”

Old Sir Aymer smiled at the compliment, while he felt it a jest; then, “What will the youth of this age come to,” he cried, in a sad and sententious tone, “when sixty must be

proxy for twenty!—But be it so—shift we the theme to war; to that strain I warrant me thou canst sing a mean or bass without a trumpet to rouse thee.”

“ Among valorous and veteran knights,” said the youthful stranger, “ such theme would ill become the lips of an adventurer who hath joined your company by chance, and who claims no honour but that of being reckoned among the meanest of those who contend for the rights of holy church.”

“ That shall not serve your turn, sir knight,” said the persevering querist; “ you have looked on deeds of chivalry ere now.”

“ I have been at the siege of the castle of Andely, and of Chateau-Gaillard,” said the stranger with reluctance*.

“ And that was a glorious encounter,” said Sir Aymer, kindling at the name of the first—“ when Robert de Lacy held out full bravely for his liege lord, King John of England. He was Norman by birth, that Robert de Lacy,”

* The facts that follow are taken principally from Rankin's History of France.

he added, passing his hand over his brow. "Tell us some stirring tale of the siege, sir knight; the English claim all the glory for the defence made by *their* Robert de Lacy."

"I have heard," said the stranger in a subdued voice, "that he whom men call Gaubert the Swimmer did good service at that siege."

"I heard not of him," said the bishop—"how goes the tale?"

"He was a man of huge strength and dauntless resolve," replied the youth; "and when the castle held out beyond all expectancy, when surprise was hopeless and assault desperate, he disrobed himself on a dark night by the edge of the castle moat, and, fastening around him certain earthen vessels skilfully stopped, and containing fire within, he plunged into the moat, and, diving his way across, lodged the concealed fire under the bastions, and ere morn the castle was in a blaze above its defenders' heads, and Robert de Lacy"—

"I remember me now," said the prelate, with marks of impatient weariness; "but, for mine own part, the feats of villains and of vassalry leave me lightly in their debt either

for credence or for merit—tell us, if thou canst, a better tale, or let us have at least a better hero.”

“The next that I remember,” said the stranger, who seemed to shun speaking of himself, “was Pierre Bogis, surnamed Camus*, whose piercing eye discovered a window in the basement story of the castle, which was kept open to air a magazine withal, and which the besieged imagined was concealed from all. At peril of his life he swam the fosse, clomb the parapet, wrenched the iron bars from the window, and, ere morn, the Earl of Chester yielded him prisoner to King Philip, who, in requital of his valorous bearing and stout defence, permitted him to walk the streets of Paris free, till order could be taken for his return to England.”

“Thou merely weariest us by these tales of the rascaille,” said the proud prelate; “what know or care we for thy Gaubert and Camus (whose nose, short as it might be, was, God wot, an overmatch for his pedigree,)—canst

* Short-nose.

thou not preach to us from a text that will teach loftier lessons?—Were there not, at the taking of Chateau-Gaillard, three youthful candidates for knighthood, who had borne them with such high and equal courage in the assault, and done such sprightly deeds of gentle emulation, that the king exclaimed, as he stood on the well-won turrets of Chateau-Gaillard, and saw the reek of its smouldering bastions ascend, and hover like clouds o'er the mouth of a volcano, 'Whoever plunges into that gulf of fire, and brings to us the most precious thing that can be saved from its burning ruin, him will we make knight-banneret on the spot where we stand, and he shall bear the oriflamme before us in battle, though kings riding beside our rein contended for its grasp.' At the word, the three youths plunged into the fiery darkness."

"It reminds me of a tale I have heard," quoth Sir Aymer, "how King Frederic of Sicily tempted a foolish diver to plunge into the gulf betwixt Scylla and Charybdis (two potent sorceresses, men say,) for a silver cup,

or the like foolish toy — marry, he never saw cup or diver more, and for what befell them the polypuses must answer.”

“ The first youth,” said the bishop, disregarding the interruption, “ whom men called Sir Ezzelin de Verac, returned with a beautiful woman whom he had saved, and bore her in his arms to Philip’s feet, not doubting that such prize liked his sovereign well. Perchance those in lofty state cannot brook a saucy consciousness of their pleasant vices in an inferior, which they deem like a rebuke ; for so it was that the king turned in displeasure from the youth — in truth, his goodly form was so defaced by affectation, and his scarf and adornments were of such fantastical and overwrought fashion, that he seemed fitter to play in a pageant with maskers than couch lance among knights who do battle. The second, the wealthy heir of Semonville, had worked like a mole amid the foundations of the castle, where the waters of the moat slaked the inendurable heat, and brought from thence pix, chalice, and candlestick of solid gold, worthy the high

altar of Notre Dame in Paris; but he approached the king with an air so mean and proud, so full of pretension and emptiness, and with a touch withal of base and plebeian confidence in his costly prize, that the king would have laughed outright, had not another and a nobler form stood beside him, bearing in his mantle somewhat which he seemed anxious, yet trembling, to offer to his sovereign."

"And what was that," said Sir Aytmer, smiling, "which King Philip held of dearer preciousness than beauty or than gold?"

"King Philip," quoth the bishop, "looked more earnestly on the youth, and bade him advance and show the prize he had won. From the folds of his bloody mantle the youth drew forth an infant, the child of an heretic Albigeois, (who had got, Heaven knows how, into the castle,) and whom its parent was about to cast into the flames, when the youth, baptizing it in his blood, whose trace the forehead of the infant yet bore, hasted to offer it to his sovereign, as the most precious

relic of the ruins. At sight of this prize, King Philip demanded the name of the youth ; whose blood, fast streaming through his broken armour, made the sacrifice of the drops with which he had assailed his wretched burden more precious and more perilous every moment. ‘ Men call me Paladour, my liege,’ said the youth, bending beneath the keen regards of Philip’s eagle eye—‘ but my birth, my descent, are all unknown to me ; mine infant life began with mystery, and not a ray hath yet broke on the dark and thorny path I have trod to manhood.’ ‘ It is the destiny of some to be the last of a mighty race,’ replied the king, ‘ and of others to be the first ; take thou no shame, youth, that the latter and better fate is thine. I trust to the promise of thy gracious and manly form, that the honours now bestowed on thee will flourish in thine own house ‘ unto the end of many generations’—Grace à Dieu, so much of holy writ have we learned from our chaplain Bigord—Paladour, kneel down.’ The youth obeyed. ‘ Rise up, Sir Paladour,’ said the king, after

a short whisper with an old knight (who was as skilful in toys of heraldry as if he had emblomed the banners of the twelve tribes when camping in the wilderness)—‘ Rise up, Sir Paladour *de la Croix Sanglante*, knight banneret, dubbed on the field of battle by the hand of thy liege lord.’—‘ And now,’ he said, ‘ let our surgeon look heedfully to his wounds, or France may lose the stoutest lance in her host, and chivalry the fairest flower in her ample field of honour and of gentleness.’”

“ And what said the young knight to this golden prodigality of royal praise and honour?” asked Sir Aymer, touched for a moment with generous admiration; then relapsing into the habit which time and indulgence had made inveterate, he loosely added—“ marry, that night I warrant the fairest maid in the vicinage, not the royal chirurgeon, found ready salve for his wounds; and the young knight would rather have pledged his new-won spurs than wanted his will.”

“ No—on my life—on my soul, he would not,” broke forth Amiralcl with all the fervour

of young enthusiasm, and the freshness of untainted purity — “the breast over which so holy a blazon is spread can nourish none but holy thoughts and pure.”

“Be not in such haste to enshrine thy demigod, sir boy,” said the bishop, with a proud laugh of dissolute derision; “men say the infant was a promising one, and that the youth had a fatherly care of it—not without cause.”

“*I* have neither parent nor child,” said the stranger, speaking for the first time after a long interval.

As he spoke, the breeze wafted aside his mantle; and the moon, which now rode high, threw her bright full light on the cognizance of Sir Paladour de la Croix Sanglante. The effect of the discovery, made thus involuntarily, was strikingly marked by the different modes in which it was recognised by the bishop, Sir Aymer, and his youthful companion. The former, full of fire and interest while the relater of a narrative which he believed unknown to the hearers, felt all that interest lost when its

genuine hero appeared ; and, after a few words of cold but courteous compliment to Sir Paladour, he was silent ;—not so old Sir Aymer ; after causing his steed to make sundry caracoles, he swore, “ by Mary’s knight, a gentler passage of knighthood might not be found in story ; ”—while Amirald, springing from his steed, bowed his knee beside Sir Paladour’s stirrup, and with resistless enthusiasm pressed his lips to his glove of mail.

At this moment the sound of a bell, heard deeply amid the silence of night, struck the ears of the crusaders. They paused, and reined up their steeds. The sound was repeated. Though their armed train was now left far behind, their courage defied all thought of danger ; but there was something unspeakably solemn in the sound thus heard at night, on the verge of a lone heath whose limits were lost in darkness, for the moon was again concealed in heavy clouds, and the bishop’s attendants had not yet lit the torches with which they were provided. In a few moments, during which scarce a breath was drawn, from

a sensation at once awful and pleasurable, lights were seen twinkling through a wood to the left, which till then had appeared like a mass of solid and sable rock, and a band of monks emerging from it with tapers in their hands in regular procession, offered, in the name of the abbot of Normoutier, the hospitality of the abbey for the night.

The night had become intensely still; not a breeze stirred a leaf of the wood, or ruffled a fold of the churchmen's garments; the tapers, burning upright and steadily, gave their strong light to the mailed forms, floating plumes, and reined and pawing steeds of the crusaders, and to the sombre habits and white scalps of the monks, the latter strongly defined on the dark and clustered trees that formed the back ground of the scene. To the bishop's indications of reluctance and distaste at this unwelcome invitation, Sir Aymer replied, by urging the impossibility of reaching the castle of Courtenaye that night. To his further intimation of danger from wandering bands of the heretics, who were known to be dispersed

over the country, the bishop replied only by an impatient movement to pursue his journey. But when Sir Aymer, whose heart was in the cause, whispered to the prelate the loose discipline and luxurious accommodation of the abbey, and swore that they would be little molested by any bell within its walls, save those which ever tolled punctually for the service of Saint Jentaculum, Saint Prandium, and Saint Cœna, the muscles of the bishop's face began to relax, and with them relaxed his resolution.

"Sith better may not be," said the bishop in a reluctant tone—then casting his eye on the armed train, who, at the tidings that they were about to halt for the night, began to gather fast round their leaders—"where, in the name of Lot and his guests, are all these to be housed and fed to-night?"

"My holy lord," said Sir Aymer, "you are not to learn that the abbot of Clugny hath received into his hospitalitium three kings, with their trains, yet never a monk was dislodged from his pallet to make room for a page in

the royal following—I trust there is not less wealth or less courtesy within the walls of the jolly abbot of Normoutier—trust me, we shall fare well.”

“On, then, in the name of Heaven, since it must be so,” quoth the bishop; “I shall at least escape the sufferings of St. Jerome, who was punished by the angels for his unchristian familiarity with the writings of Cicero. I am not likely to hear much of him to-night, and if I did, the ancient, if raised from the dead, could not swear to his own name were it uttered by the abbot of Normoutier.”

As the prelate spoke, the train of knights and men-at-arms approached the gates of the abbey of Normoutier.

CHAPTER IV.

There was high feasting held at Vaucouleur.

SOUTHEY.

THE valves of the great entrance were displayed to their utmost extent on the approach of the crusaders, and the bishop rode through them in pride, recollecting that such entrance was never opened but for a royal visitor, or for one honoured next to royalty*. Sir Aymer and the young knights followed; and fast behind them came the mingled and multitudinous throng of men at-arms, Pelerins, and military stragglers, all zealously inclined to put to the proof the munificent hospitality of the princely-revenued abbot of Normoutier. The group rallied, and formed in a vast square,

* See a curious passage to this purpose in Madame Genlis' *Life of Madame La Valiere*.

which was enclosed by the buildings of the abbey.

The lord abbot, who was engaged with a guest whom he much wished to conceal, and who, like many modern inviters, had sent the invitation in strong hopes of its being rejected, now rushed forward, in his first trepidation, issuing contradictory orders, and uttering unintelligible quotations, in the same breath, to his visitor, and to the monastic officials, who crowded into his presence for direction and orders. To the former he whispered, "Hide thyself with that speed thou hast. Alack! thou hast not had a morsel of food or a cup of wine. *Lusisti satis edisti atque bibisti.*" To his cross-bearer, "Do me thine office seemly; knowest thou not its dignity, and to what thou mayst yet aspire? — Hum. — *Pasces in cruce corvos.*" And as the friars thronged into the procession, eyeing their stony figures, and the perpendicular and motionless folds of their drapery, he murmured, "Ay, this looks well. — *Sinuantur flamine vestes.*"

And while the torch-bearers stood in goodly row,

Each holding as it were a staff,

A taper burning bright.—SOUTHEY.

“They burn steadily and bright,” he cried;
“*Afflavit Deus ventis, et dissipantur.*—
Now, where be my ring, my cope, my”—
as he hastily indued the insignia presented
by the lay-assistants—“Now all is meetly
ordered, and as a father saith, ‘*Asinus
portat mysteria.*’ Now for a witty greeting
to meet the bishop withal—as—*Amice, ad
quod venisti*—Fie, that were stale,—they say
the ghost of my predecessor murmurs that at
the door of my cell every night.”

As the lord abbot spoke, the increasing
trampling of the steeds, the clashing of the
armour, and the ringing of the massive spurs
of the knights on the paved court, warned him
he had not a moment to lose; and quickening
his movements, he led the way, surrounded by
his ecclesiastical attendants, to greet his dis-
tinguished guests with the mingled courtliness

and formality of a man of the world and a monastic dignitary.

His guests collected in such order as they might, to await his welcome; and as they stood, rode, or knelt, the torches lit by the bishop's attendants blazing on the band, there was a magnificence of grouping, a glare of light, a depth of shadow, a broad and bold outline of the principal figures, and a tumultuous and massive heaping in the perspective, that made the scene of meeting like a dark but richly tinted picture, of some hand of the olden time; such as we see by dim and unpropitious light in some ancient gallery, and wish, as we gaze, to snatch it from the wall, and hold it up once more to the light before it fades for ever.

The inner gates, at the extremity of the court, opposite to, and correspondent with, those of the great entrance, widely unfolded, displayed the goodly person of the abbot, standing between their ample valves, with a vast attendance of monks and torch-bearers in the

rear; taper and torch flinging a yellow and smoky but strong glare on the foremost figures of the group on both sides; while the vapour, eddying in thick and heavy wreaths round the cloistered stories, narrow windows, and tapering carved spires of the interior buildings, and then descending, settled in a dark but richly tinted mass (purple streaked, like that which precedes the thunder storm,) over the crowded heads of the multitude, lay and clerical, who thronged the vast area. The light fell powerfully on the contrasted figures of the gorgeously robed abbot and his pale mute attendants, with their sallow aspects, bare scalps, dark habits, and apathetic features, and the dazzling reflection flashed back from shirts of mail, cuisses of steel, embroidered surcoats, emblazoned banners, and chains of all rich metals, and the caparisons of war-steeds, mingled from the sparkling chevrons on their foreheads to the gilded bells on their necks, with the scarlet and purple plumage of their crested riders,

who vailed their heads low in honour of their host, while the court of the abbey rung beyond the echoes of its loudest bells with the trampling of the steeds, the trooping of the multitude, the tumult of martial and monastic life, thus abruptly thrown together, yet each combating for and maintaining its own splendid formality and solemn pretension. Even the well-intended courtesy of the knights, as they sprung from their steeds, and lowering lance and pennon, in reverence to the place, shook the stone pavement with the clatter of their armour, caused a din that, warlike, exhilarating, and glory-sounding as it was, made the abbot's brains reel under his jewelled cope; and he hastened to bestow the monastic forms of benediction to his guests, to avoid further ceremonial. It was at this moment that above, and distinct from all other sounds, a voice from the crowd was heard to exclaim, "Hold — hold — tarry for *my* blessing! I have waited long to shed it on you: tarry a moment yet."

The bishop and the knights, amazed, reined

up their steeds, and cast back angry glances on the train, conceiving that this interruption must arise from some drunken minstrel, or "all-licensed fool," who had chosen ill time to vent his buffoonery in.

The men-at-arms who followed them, as if to exculpate themselves from such charge, opened on each side in opposite semicircles, and in the centre stood a figure, covered in dark drapery from head to foot; sex, form, and age, were alike undistinguishable; only the torch-light, resting fully through the wide opening just made, rendered the form perfectly visible. For a moment it seemed motionless as it was inscrutable; then advancing, with a movement whose rapidity caused some tremor in the breasts of those it glided past, it stopped between the bishop and the abbot. "Bless on," it said, in a soft and unnatural voice,—"I come to bless also." Then, with a sudden and supernatural exaltation of accent, "Accursed be ye slayers of men!" it cried, pointing to the crusaders; "accursed be ye who bless those that deface the image of your

mutual Maker ! For every drop of blood *ye* shed, or *ye* sanctify, may oceans of molten lead be roaring and hissing for you in the teeming, over-seething caldrons of your master and mine."

" Blasphemer — wizard — sacrilegious ! " — uttered a thousand voices, and a hundred lances were raised against the offender : one of these chanced to raise the thick veil that covered the figure ; it fell back, and discovered the form of a woman. The uproar increased, " A female, and within cloistered walls ! — a female ! shame for thy sex ! and insult to these walls ! " cried the ecclesiastics, " What makest thou here ? " The military followers soon caught the example of indignity and outrage, and the wretched female was hurried to the gate. — Breaking from them she exclaimed, in a voice that made the rudest pause : — " A woman ! Yes ; Did not a woman bear ye ? Did not a woman nurse ye ? Did not a woman love ye ? Ay, or ye had never grown to that pitch of lustihood : and manly and grateful use ye make of it, to thrust and throng a woman thus ! "

Some of the gentler held back; and taking advantage of her momentary liberation, she walked rapidly forward, and standing close to the bishop of Toulouse, before he was aware of her approach, she asked abruptly, "Dost thou know me?"

"Know thee, vile hag!" cried the proud prelate, recoiling from her in ineffable disdain.

"Yet thou knewest me once," said the figure, "and I know thee yet; drunk with pride, and crime, and blood, as thou art; and as deeply and bitterly as I have wished, from this withered heart, that I had never beheld thee, so deeply shalt thou wish, one day, from that burning and ulcerated heart of thine, that thou hadst never seen *me*. Oh! vengeance is long-lived; and for years after the tree is blasted and leafless, the trace of the lightning that scathed it remains on its trunk. Knowest thou me?" she continued, turning to Sir Paladour.

Paladour, who recognised his guide over the lake, and round whom fearful reminiscences,

and more terrible anticipations, began to gather at the sight, shrunk from it, and leaned for support on the shoulder of Sir Amirald ; who, ignorant of the cause of his agitation, supported him with that homage, at once affectionate and reverential, which the youthful brave are first to pay to the mature in valour and glory.

Meanwhile the wretched female was fast hurried to the gate by the military and ecclesiastic attendants ; but not before, turning her tall figure, and waving her arm above her head, she exclaimed, “ Ye know me not—ye know me not—none of ye know me now. Be it so ; but ye will all—all—ay, spurn and buffet me as ye will,” she cried, struggling with the rude attendants—“ Ye will all, at mortal peril of your lives, and to your souls’ eternal bale, ye *shall* all know me hereafter.”

She was then thrust from the gate ; and this accident little discomposed the ceremonial of the meeting. The procession moved on ; the

bishop, reverently welcomed as the prime guest in honour and sanctity, marched at the right hand of the abbot; the knights followed, through a narrow and stone-paved passage; the clank of their armed tread and ringing spurs making its arches resound with other echo than that of the whispered Benedicite, so long the sole and tranquil tenant of its solitude. From this dark and narrow passage, which Sir Aymer, as he stumbled through it, termed the previous purgatory to the paradise of the abbot's refectory, the guests passed into a spacious hall. It seemed dim at first, but the attendants crowding in fast with their torches, and arranging themselves behind the guests, as they seated themselves, soon made the space which they encircled as bright as noon, while the thick smoke that arose from the torches formed a kind of atmospheric canopy that enriched and deepened the lustre below.

The banquet was worthy of the wealth and hospitality of the abbot of Normoutier. At the extremity of the two long tables, which extended half the length of the refectory, there

was a transverse table, to which the abbot led the bishop and his more distinguished guests : this was the *dais* of this monastic banquet-hall, and was raised about three feet above the level of the paved floor ; but all the tables were heaped with the same profusion of game, fowls, and fish, (not cold, like the relics of a feast, but all smoking, and all of them “ grissamber steamed,”) with entremets of march-pane, blanc-mange, and *subtilties* then so called, being devices in confectionary, with figures, flags, and mottoes. All wondered how the abbot could on the sudden heap his tables with such daintiness and profusion ; but that was a secret which the lord abbot kept to himself ; and it was certain that the appetite of his guests was not at all observed to diminish in consequence of their not participating in it.

Ample store of pigment and claret washed down their costly viands, and reconciled even the most fastidious of the feasters to the comparatively coarse accommodation of this conventual revel. Save the tables, — which were covered with carpets, sore worn and much

stained with wine, and the benches, which were totally bare,—the ample hall was wholly unfurnished; except that, in an obscure unheeded nook, stood a kind of wooden pulpit, from whence, in days of purer discipline, a monk used to read a homily or a legend during the period of the temperate meal. Yet, amid this meagre and uncouth arrangement, there was a picturesque glory of light and colouring, of costume, and character, that redeemed the inferiority of all “appliances and means to boot,” and shed over this mixture of meanness and magnificence a lustre that intoxicated the eye and the imagination.

The volumes of dark and wreathed smoke, that rose from the torches of the attendants, hung at an undulating distance above: above them still was seen the dark but richly carved wainscoting of the refectory, which rose to the height of eighteen feet on its walls; and above that again the sole vast window, that enlightened it by day, and that now, with all its glory of emblazoned panes, and burning hues, and figures of saints, as

glowingly portrayed as if the tints were kindled at the flames and furnaces that consumed them, rose in rich pride above the mingled and heavy masses of light and vapour that crossed each other in the lower part of the hall. And above all, the risen moon, in her full-orbed light, gleamed through the uncoloured compartments of the topmost panes with pure, pale, silver light. These three strongly-marked belts of light might, even to an unimagined gazer, have suggested the idea of the gross and sordid vapours that depress the soul in its first aspirations; then of the gorgeous, mystical, and fantastic gleam, that superstition sheds on the eye it dazzles and bedims; and, lastly, of that pure and holy beam that breaks on the soul that has struggled through the mists of life, and the illusions of fanaticism, and fixes its failing organ on that light which emanates from Him who is light, and the Father of it.

Unconscious of thoughts like these, or, indeed, of any but what were "more germane to the matter" of feasting, Sir Aymer, after his

trencher had been often replenished by the sewer, and his goblet still oftener by the cellarer and his assistants, turned suddenly to the bishop of Toulouse, and exclaimed, "Said I not, my lord, that I would quit your tale of the knight De la Croix Sanglante, with a romaunt of mine own, worth many a minstrel's tale? — Marry, the bishop heeds me not — he is deep in sad and holy talk with the lord abbot. — Now Heaven forefend that I should mar their conference! Doubtless it is on some grave matter, touching the widening of the nunnery grates, or the abridging of veils and frontlets; would they would admit me of their counsel! Come on, Sir Paladour, pledge me in a full goblet, and thou shalt hear a tale worthy a knight's ear."

"Noble knight," said Sir Paladour, slowly raising the goblet to his lip, and slightly tasting it, "Noble knight, I pledge you."

"Nay, I will name a pledge," quoth Sir Aymer, "that will make thee drain the goblet as if a favour from thy lady-love lay sparkling

at the bottom. Pledge me here to him* who saved the life of king Philip at the battle of Bovines."

"To the bottom of my cup and of my heart," answered the young knight, emptying the former at a draught. "But who was he, I pray you? I have heard of him, but men said that, with the modesty of a true valour, he shuns all fame and mention."

"And he doth so," answered Sir Aymer, repelling the monitory pressure of Sir Amiral's hand on his mantle. "Nathless men will talk of him, though the virtuous fool himself were praying them for silence. Bore you arms on that bloody day, sir knight?"

"I was not so honoured," answered Paladour.

"Ah! there were deeds wrought to stir the blood in bold hearts, and make the harps of minstrels ring as though the chords were fire!" cried Sir Aymer; and he pro-

* Vide Rankin's History of France.

ceeded, in "good circumstance," to detail the battle of Bovines to Sir Paladour; whose ear, filled for ever with mysterious and inaudible whisperings, caught but half his tale, and welcomed the noisy stranger but coldly. Sir Aymer described the vast disparity in numbers betwixt the army of king Philip and that of the emperor Otho; the former amounting to but fifty thousand, while the latter trebled that number.

He spoke of the skilful disposition by which the king of France gained to his forces the advantage of sun and wind, and the (till then unheard of, or, at least, unpractised,) system of warfare, by which he arrayed the squires and armour-bearers in the van; with whom the knights of the imperial army, disdaining at first to contend, were mowed down by hundreds; till, feeling the blows of squires as heavy and mortal as those of dubbed knights, they deigned at length to return them, but too late to prevent their own utter defeat and discomfiture.

So far Sir Aymer related like a cool and

experienced martialist; but when his narrative bore him into the heat of the battle, his heart and tongue kindled with his theme, and he exclaimed, " Hadst thou seen, sir knight, the close of that day, thou hadst never wished to behold another: no after-time, or after-tale, were worth the living for or listening. The field was well-nigh won by king Philip's chivalry, when the emperor Otho, who had all that day done deeds surpassing human valour, made his last and furious charge against the royal guard, who fought closely round the king, for fear of the assassins. It was a perilous and mortal shock — a bloody and fearful grappling. The royal guard dealt about their iron-headed clubs with heavy force and wearied strength. The duke of Burgundy, who fought by the king's banner, was unhorsed. The count St. Paul, the stoutest lance in the royal host, lay wounded, and supported by his squires at the foot of a tree. King Philip himself fought on foot, though he was now dealing impotent blows on the dead bodies of his guard, that, faithful even after death, lay

round him like a rampart. The emperor Otho pressed on, mounted for the third time that day, and surrounded by the flower of the imperial chivalry. It was then the few who still fought round King Philip, and deemed all lost in his danger, shouted aloud, "Lower the oriflamme, in token of the king's peril!" The oriflamme had bent no more from its stately height all that day than the oak of the forest, when the storm hath swept it, and laid all but its monarch on the earth; but, at the cry of the knights, the banner-bearer lowered the oriflamme, and a hundred knights, from various distances and dangers of the field, hasted to the royal rescue. I was then in a far distant spot, confronted with that traitor Eustache de Maguelines; but, when I saw the oriflamme lowered, it seemed to me as if the sun was sunk. I know not how it fared with me—all wandered in a bloody mist. But I say, Sir Paladour," continued the veteran, recovering his voice, "an hundred, yea two hundred, sore wounded as they were,

so that many could scarce bestride their steeds, hastened from every part of the field at that signal.

“ But there was *one*, a boy in arms, a wanderer, a mere adventurer of the day, unnamed and unknown, who arrived first of them all — with one blow of a battle-axe, which he had snatched from some powerless hand, he clove the skull of the emperor’s horse, while the rider’s grasp was on the king of France’s rein, who was again horsed; and the noble steed, rearing in mortal agony, turned with his rider from the blow. King Philip shouted, “ The emperor hath turned his back and fled!” The word spread like lightning. The chivalry of France rallied;—and—and for the rest of the day,” said Sir Aymer, wiping his eyes, which overflowed involuntarily at the mention or relation of a noble action, “ methinks this boy left us little to do but to chase the flanks of the emperor’s host as a hawk would a flight of pigeons; and, as we bound up our wounds, to curse the Count of Flanders, who gave the cause of

quarrel. But, as touching that boy, — Know you him?" said he abruptly to Amirald.

"No one knows him less," said the youth, in a suppressed tone.

"There thou liest, and loudly," quoth Sir Aymer, with the coarse jocularly permitted in that age between equals in rank. "Thou art the man, or *wilt* be, if thou livest to be a man. Now, by the saints, it was thou thyself didst the very deed, and won'st thy title of knight banneret from the royal hand of Philip: an hand that would, ere this day, have been cold, had not thine — *thine*, clove the skull of the emperor's steed. Tush, what signify words, or becks, or blushes? reserve them for thy bridal, if ever thou gettest a beard, and breath enough to woo a maiden withal. Sir Paladour, I wot thee to know this is Amirald, who saved the life and royaume of our liege lord King Philip. Now shame to me, a bearded knight, to sit betwixt two boys knight bannerets, whilst I — Fill me a cup of Muscadel, good cellarer, to wash down remembrance."

While the cellarer promptly handed the cup, which the knight as promptly quaffed, Sir Paladour, tearing off his glove of mail, eagerly extended his hand to Sir Amirald; and again the youth, instead of grasping it in his, pressed it to his lips with grateful reverence.

“ And wast thou the unknown youth,” said Paladour, extricating his hand, “ of whom I have heard such glorious tales; who, when the oriflamme and fleur-de-lis vailed before the lion and the dragon, upbore them like the streamers of a drifting bark, and sailed gloriously with them into haven?”

“ Less honoured in such deed,” said the blushing youth, “ than in the clasp of that hand, which saved a soul from mortal sin, and baptized it in the blood that burst from the gracious fountain of a Christian heart.”

“ I like not this,” said Sir Aymer, shaking his head, “ I like not this. I see thou hast found thee a new brother-in-arms; and thy father-in-arms, as you was wont in fondness to term me, must now give place.” But as he

spoke in a tone of affected anger, his eye rested with delight on the view of mutual affection, thus kindled in brave young hearts by the recital of honourable deeds, and illuminating features in which the glow of enthusiasm was heightened by the consciousness of valour.

At this moment the raised voices of the bishop and the abbot caught the ear of the old knight; for whose ready organ any sound of tumult, from the thunder of the battle to the roar of the revel, had an excitement and a charm; and he exclaimed, laughing, "What, more brothers-in-arms! By my faith they pledge their vow somewhat aloud." And he turned towards the disputants, whose clamour was now at the highest.

The abbot, according to the habits of the age, had begun the conversation by courteously pressing his guest to partake of various dishes, and solemnly excusing the deficiencies of his entertainment; but his "bald disjointed chat," patched with ill-assorted Latin, seemed designed to turn into a jest the welcome it was meant to convey.

“ What now, my lord,” he said; “ you scorn our sorry cheer. Nay, you must wash it down with a cup of Muscadine, or wine of Candy; for what saith a certain father? *Ne quis modici transiliat munera Liberi, Centaurea monet cum Lapithis rixa*; wherefore I say, *deprome quadrimum, strenua Lyde*.” (The *strenua Lyde* was a paralytic monk of fourscore, assistant to the cellarer).

“ Fill higher,” said the bishop, “ reverend brother, till I pledge the lord abbot; for saith not the same father, *vertere pallor tum parochi faciem, nil sic metuentis ut acres potores?*”

“ By my mitre, a shrewd text, and aptly quoted,” cried the abbot. “ Nay, your lordship hath the gifts. Alack! my memory (bestrew mine overmuch love of study) is a blank, a desert, a quicksand. What with the fathers, the lives of the saints, homilies on vigils, and mysteries for holidays, the constitutions of the order, and private exhortations, my brain is a mere Babel, and my zeal for learning hath eaten me up.”

“ I pray you, reverend abbot,” quoth the

bishop, "let your memory be fruitful in answer to an idle question:—Of what rule is your community?"

The abbot's dull blue eye, that had begun to twinkle with incipient ebriety, sunk at this question under the penetrating glance of the bishop, and he faltered out, "The Benedictine."

"I asked but for mine own satisfaction, my reverend host," said the bishop; "for you know," contemptuously substituting the fragment of a royal sumptuary edict for a quotation from a canon of the order, "*Nemo audeat dare præter duo fercula cum potagio.*"

"We will have none of those texts handled now," said the abbot. "Fill a goblet of Greekish wine to my lord of Toulouse. My lord, I marvel how grapes may grow in Greece, an outlandish country, men say many leagues from France."

"If I remember me," said the bishop, "some of the rules of your order be, that the monks quit not their cells but to go to church, nor speak to any but with good

leave ; that their beds be straw, with a coverlet of woollen cloth, and their habit," glancing at the abbot's ermined and jewelled vestments, " a cowl, hose, and cloak of hair-cloth ; that at meals their hands be on the table, their eyes on the dish, their attention on the reader, and their hearts on God."*

" My holy lord," said the abbot, rallying, " however we may as it were abridge and overpass certain items of our rule, there be others also of which we have high regard, nothing intermitting the performing of the same : for proof, look down the board, and wherever the attention be straying, I trow you shall find every hand on the table, and every eye on the dish. Marry, good discipline, and meetly observed ! What ! some of our rules be as mouldy as the bones of the founder, and did we stick to them with an unadvised sourness, little should we joy in such guests as gallant knights, or reverend bishops either ; seeing that, by the charter of Hugh, bishop of Grenoble, (whose soul is in para-

* Rules of the Benedictine Order.

dise,) no woman is allowed to pass through our conventual territories: a grievous prohibition, and nowise tending, I guess, to make our neighbourhood the more gracious to my lord of Toulouse. For, as Saint Augustine hath it, *ubi fœmina est, quid est quod potest deesse, ubi autem non est, quid est quod potest prodesse?* *

“Thou art right, lord abbot,” said the prelate, nothing displeased at this allusion to his gallant propensities; “and I hold thy copy of St. Augustine more orthodox than mine own. Were it not to behold the fair beauty of the lady Isabelle of Courtenaye, and to visit the shrine of that enskyed goddess, I would not set foot in stirrup, or lance in rest, for all the peril of her craven kinsman.”

“They speak her a peerless and unimaginable beauty, a treasury of unsummed excellencies, and, indeed, a paradise of all rare felicities,” said the abbot; “and yet I warrant I have seen fairer than she.”

“Thou merely talkest profanely against

* The reader need hardly be told that in this passage the abbot substitutes *fœmina* for *caritas*.

that heaven of beauty," said the bishop impatiently, "and art a heretic in heart, if not in thy creed. What saint hath taught thee thy new faith?"

"A peasant damsel, the daughter of an Albigeois, whom I saved from being converted in a summary way by certain Pelerins, on a day."

"Humph! since thou lackedst charity for the task," said the bishop, "thou shouldst have left it to more willing hands."

"Never trust me, but her innocent helplessness and beauty pitied me at my very heart."

"What talkest thou of thy peasant maiden?" said the bishop in scorn; "thine eyes shall be opened, and that shall be revealed to thee that shall convert thee in a twinkling. Ho! brother Eustache!"—he called to his crosier-bearer; "my breviary, I say." Then, in a tone half confidential, half boastful, to the abbot, "I have caused a cunning limner to counterfeit the features of all the prized dames of France, in the margin of this book, under the forms of female saints. Con the holy page well,

lord abbot," he added, with a smile, as he gave the splendidly illuminated volume into his hands, "and tell me whose lineaments there, from Queen Ingelberg on the throne, to the abbess Eloise in the cloister, may vie with those of the lady Isabelle."

The abbot, no stranger to this invention of profane gallantry, which was practised in France, even so late as the reign of Henry the Third, received the book with the smile of a gratified connoisseur, and proceeded to study its pages with an air of profound meditation. The head of the beauteous Isabelle, portrayed as Saint Cecilia, drew from him a cry of delighted admiration; but, after gazing on it for some time, he swore to the bishop, by his faith as a Christian, and his habit as a monk, that the peasant maid was fairer.

"An umpire! an umpire! there is treachery in the lists," exclaimed the bishop.

"And to what umpire shall we better appeal than to yon young knights?" answered the abbot.

It was at this period of their conversation that their exalted voices reached the ear of Sir Aymer. The arbitration was eagerly accepted by the young knights, among whom Sir Aymer affected to consider himself included, and the crosier-bearer put the gorgeous book into the hands of Sir Paladour.

“A prosperous augury! the book opens of itself at the page of my saint,” said the bishop, as he beheld the eye of Sir Paladour riveted on the portrait of her, who was never excelled in beauty by the fairest of the daughters of men. “Have you ever beheld aught so fair, sir knight?” demanded the bishop.

“Never,” answered Sir Paladour, with a burst of emotion, that gave that little word the effect of volumes.

“Nay, let us judge not rashly,” said Sir Aymer; “these texts must not be so handled. What says our coadjutor, Sir Amiral?”

“That I have beheld a far fairer,” said Sir Amiral, in the deep but timid tones of suppressed emotion.

At this moment, while many gazers were collected round the portrait, the abbot, who had good reason for being on the watch, saw distinctly a dark figure emerge, like a shadow, from a distant nook, mingle for a moment among the group unobserved, as they bent over it, and then retire, no one seeing him but the abbot. All his insouciance and jollity forsook him at this vision, which he interpreted but too well. He sunk back in his chair, pale and gasping; then starting up, exclaimed, "The torches wax dim, and the night doth wane, our noble guests must needs lack repose." The guests rose.

"We trouble you, sir abbot," said the bishop.

"Nay, my holy lord," quoth the abbot, recovering his presence of mind, and his suavity, "I doubt your hard couch will make ill apology for your stinted fare. Ho! tapers and meet attendance for my lord of Toulouse; suffer me to be your lordship's torch-bearer."

The ceremonial of parting now commenced; the bishop and abbot exchanged the kiss of peace; the former bestowed his benison on the

knights, who knelt reverently to receive it, and then on their followers, who took it kneeling or standing, as they might.

"My holy lord, and noble knights, a fair good rest," said the abbot. "My brethren, I give you a dispensation from midnight lauds."

"By the mass," said Sir Aymer, "we have sung them to St. Bacchus for the last half hour; their chimes will ring in my head till matins."

It was half an hour ere the refectory was cleared of the guests, the monks, and the men-at-arms. The abbot walked up and down restlessly among the lay-brothers, who were removing the viands, and the cellarer and his assistants, who were busy about the wine flagons, and drinking cups.

"These matters shall be cared for," said the abbot; "tarry not now; I will lock the door of the refectory, and the remnants of the feast will serve for—the poor. Tarry not now, but depart, I pray you. Why loiterest thou?" he added, angrily, to the paralytic monk, who tottered from the refectory, singing, or rather

croning over part of the hymn went to be chanted at the *Feast of Asses*:—

*Lentus erat pedibus
Nisi foret baculus
Et cum in clunibus
Pungeret aculeus.*

“Take heed, thou sluggard,” said the abbot, whom association had made familiar with the meaning of the Latin words, “lest thou hast to pray thy Saint Aculeus too to spare thee his goad, an’ thou tarriest longer.”

The ample hall was at length empty, and the abbot walked up and down for some time, looking at the fragments of the feast, with an expression of restlessness and absence. As the last servitor departed, the abbot went out and locked the door of the refectory. In the meantime all bed-rites had been done to the guests of the abbey: the monks had resigned their cells to the men-at-arms; the rude and disorganized band of the Pelerins were housed in the ample offices of the abbey. The bishop of Toulouse was marshalled to his

selected apartment by the sacristan, with a wax taper in each hand, followed by two monks with torches. He took courteous leave of the knights in the narrow passage which led to their separate apartments, and entered his own. The splendid curtains that encano-pied his bed were of silk, wrought with silver and gold, the sheets were cambric, and, contrary to the decree of Urban the Second, the coverlet was of miniver; yet this superb chamber lacked all the appliances which a modern garret would have furnished: in lieu of them stood an ample vase of holy water, and opposite, in a niche, which contained the image of the Virgin, two tapers were lit, whose smoke had blackened it to the hue of ebony. The bishop threw off his robes, which he had resumed during the feast; the wind, from a broken casement, shook the tapestry, that, coarsely nailed to the walls, shivered in every blast; the rats chased each other over the floor, and gnawed at the gold-twisted hangings of the bed; and the bishop, after gazing on the martial figures in the tapestry

till their shapes multiplied and darkened in his eye, sunk into a slumber. Sir Aymer was conducted to an inferior apartment; and when the monks who attended him thither retired, leaving him to the care of his squire, the old knight flung himself at his length on a wooden settle, or form, in his chamber, and bidding his squire call him if the heretics assailed the abbey of Normoutier ere morning, was asleep in a moment. Sir Paladour and Sir Amirald were ushered to the same chamber. An over-watched and weary monk placed a lamp on an oaken stand, and, with a drowsy Benedicite, left them together. In silence, they flung their armed limbs by each other; and a muttered night-prayer, and short but fervent clasp of each other's hands, were the only preludes to that slumber which soon fell deeply on both. Sir Paladour's dreams were illuminated by the lovely apparition of the lady Isabelle, and Amirald's by one still lovelier.

Through the vast extent of the abbey walls, the sounds of tumultuous and highly excited

life subsiding into repose, were heard every moment less and less distinctly. The cataract of noise that all night had thundered through court and cloister, was fast sinking into a stillly murmur, and soon that murmur itself was hushed. The snort and stamp of steeds, and the noise of the inferior multitude in the outer court, ceased first. On them always falls first the blessing of the "*prima quies*." Then died away the clash and clang of the iron-shod men-at-arms, as they trod the passages to their respective cells, or flung themselves, like rocks of metal, on their creaking pallets. Then all was still, save the whisper-like hymn of the novices from the pistorium; where, after it had been duly sifted and prepared by the priests and deacons, they were employed in shaping the consecrated wafer for the holy ceremonies. At this moment the abbot was stealing unseen, with a lamp in his hand, and his sandals off, along the passage that led to the refectory. After a long pause he slowly opened the door, and throwing, while he held up the lamp, an apprehensive

glance around, he entered. All was dark in the deserted hall. The abbot, treading as if every footfall would waken a slumbering enemy, descended a few stone steps, to a low and narrow-arched door, that lay below the level of the paved hall: he opened it, and whispering, "Descend swiftly, all is safe, and the night is wearing fast;" descending steps, for the door opened on a narrow stair, soon greeted his ears; and the figure which had been seen more than once that night within the walls of the abbey, bowing beneath the narrow door, entered the hall of the refectory.

CHAPTER V.

Didst thou not share? — hadst thou not fifteen pence?

Merry Wives of Windsor.

As this strange visitor crossed the hall, the abbot threw himself into his chair with an air sullen and dissatisfied, but inquisitive and anxious withal. The visitor, seeming nothing to regard his looks, strode across the hall with firm but light steps, till he stood right opposite the abbot. He was a man apparently of middle age, formed like a Hercules, and with a strongly marked, but not unpleasant physiognomy. Yet, though the general contour of his features was good, and such as a shallow and hasty observer would have deemed handsome, there were lines of cunning and ferocity in his countenance, and a hard brow, and a sneering lip, and a look of defiance, with a forced gleam of insolent jocularitv playing over it, that bespoke

a character at war with itself, where, though the worse struggled potently with the better part, and was ultimately sure of the victory, yet still the better was not wholly subdued, nor as yet inactive.

His dress was as singular as his figure; his tunic and hose were of the woollen cloth worn by peasants (probably adopted for disguise); over his broad shoulders was spread a cloak of wolf-skin; a cap of the same material was on his head, and in its front uncouthly sparkled a gem of price; his feet were covered with strong buskins, plaited with leathern straps. But what appeared to strike most the abbot's eye, was the richly-jewelled dagger that was stuck in his coarse belt; the spear, too, in his hand, which gleamed brightly in the reflected glow of the dying embers, had a certain share of the dignitary's uneasy attention. Such was the figure who now confronted the abbot of Normoutier, and who seated himself, sans invitation, on the first bench that offered itself.

The lord abbot clasped and unclasped his hands, rich with many a ring, poised himself

in his chair, and then, with looks averted, demanded — “ Now, thou naughty knave, as I before demanded when the arrival of the crusaders interrupted us, whence comest thou ? ”

“ From the rat-hole where I hid me till the visit was overpast — marry, let me taste a cup of wine to wash down the cobwebs I swallowed there, and their musty recollection that is even now rising in my throat. ” And as he spoke, he knocked off the head of a flagon of wine with his dagger-hilt, and drained its contents at a draught.

“ A truce with thy tricks of foolish wit, ” said the abbot doggedly, “ and answer me roundly whence comest thou ? ”

“ From my palace, dormitory, and fortalice of L’Aigle sur la Roche, ” said the outlaw, for such he was.

“ I deemed no better, ” said the abbot sullenly ; “ it were a rare sight to see thee come full-handed from the plunder of a castle (I mean a hamlet) of the heretics ; or the disburthening of a band of pilgrims richly gifted, or of merchants wealthily laden travelling

towards some town of mart, as Nismes or Beaucaire; marry, the heretics have left nought to be plundered in Toulouse—and for Beziers, it is as empty as—thy purse, I trow. And what may be thy errand here at this time, fellow?”

“To win absolution for all sins for the time forepast, and indulgence for those that may be committed for forty days to come,” quoth the outlaw. “You wot well that the season for adventures is approaching; autumn hath set in sharp and early; but my knaves will not break up the capon till the lord abbot hath said grace. Marry, if you could strain courtesy, and stretch the indulgence to twice that period, we should be much your debtors.”

“Debtors!” rejoined the abbot—“ay, and our debtors ye would remain till doomsday. Hear ye me, sir outlaw, sir robber!—thou hast exhausted the exchequer of the church; thou hast drawn upon her indulgence till there remains not enough to save a soul of thine excommunicated fraternity from purgatory, far less from another place you wot of;

thou ever comest craving for indulgence when the saints have not one to spare—and worse, thou bringest nothing to purchase it with. Where be the silver lamps for the shrines, the plate for the altar, the rich robes for the saints?—where be all that thou hast promised for years, and lacking which our abbey shows like the cell of an eremite, or a chapel hewed by miners out of the bare rock?—An' I am not ashamed to say mass in our church before the crusaders to-morrow, I am no mitred abbot."

The outlaw muttered something about hard and perilous times, and about the country being overspread by the crusading armies, or by bands of the Albigensis, who were as poor as mendicants, and ended by urging his former petition for indulgence.

"Indulgence me no indulgences," quoth the abbot, "but come roundly to the matter in hand. What hast thou to offer for the boon thou seekest of the church?—Hast thou not had absolution already for rapine, murder, and conflagration, beyond all modest count and computation?—Did I not annul for thy sake

the 'truce of God,' solemnly kept by the boldest barons and deadliest foes in France, and give thee license to prede and burn in the weeks of Advent?—Have I even spared Lent for thy sake?"

"Thou hadst the plunder of two castles for it," muttered the outlaw.

"Nay, did I not," continued the abbot, who seemed not to hear him—"Did I not, overpassing all thine other enormities, connive at thy devouring a haunch of red-deer on Good Friday, the most abominable of all thy transgressions?"

"Your refectory board, lord abbot," quoth the offender, "smoked with the pasty of that very deer three days following."

"Tell not me—talk not to me," said the abbot wrathfully—"my conscience can bear the burden no longer."

"Nor can my conscience any longer bear the burden of your impositions," cried the incensed outlaw, striking his iron-nerved hand on the table with a force that made its planks start asunder. "For forepast transgressions I am

but lightly thy debtor, I trow ; and for what I seek, if the band of L'Aigle sur la Roche lack indulgence, let the abbot of Normoutier look how his board be spread, and his cellars stored, when he next holds a feast for prelates and crusaders."

"Thou knowest the way to win me," said the abbot ; "or, as a certain father hath it, *cedant arma togæ*.—But, God-a-mercy, wilt thou drink all the wine, and devour the remnants of the feast alone?—methinks I am sore athirst, and could never handle these texts with dry lips."

The outlaw, who had been eating and drinking sans intermission, knocking off the heads of the bottles with the handle of his dagger, and helping himself furiously with its point to the scattered viands, placed a flagon beside his host.

"Thou wast muttering something about indulgence for thy lawless band," said the abbot, sinking into a solemn and pacific tone as he drained the flagon to its last drop—"hadst thou not better seek it first for thyself?" Then

fixing his light but keen eyes, on the outlaw :
“ Deemest thou the bells of Normoutier have deafened me to the hearing of all other sound ? Where be the two hundred bezants thou robbedst the Jew of under the walls of Nismes within this week ? ”

“ Sir abbot,” quoth the outlaw, “ in robbing a Jew I deemed I was doing service to holy church, and needed not to trouble the saints for their merits to pay the price of mine own.”

“ And was it also doing the church service when thou plunderedst a company of merchants, who were travelling with jewels of price from Italy for the princess Alice, and such they were as might enrich for life the man who won them ? ”

“ We deemed such gear too heavy for rascal burghers, and too light for churchmen,” said the dauntless robber, “ and so we kept them for ourselves — all but this gem ; ” and he took it from his cap. “ And now I pray, lord abbot, let not the saint look dim longer, unless some fair leman of

thine wills to outshine him, and wear it in her carkanet next confession-day."

The abbot's passion here rose beyond all bounds; but he had one to contend with whose voice was as loud, whose passions were as fierce, and whose plea was perhaps the stronger.

"Curb thee, lord abbot," he cried; "for the matter in debate we peril life and limb, and our souls beside, if all thou sayest be true; and what receive we from thee but empty promises of absolution, (and I know not what,) that a century hence, if these heretics thrive, would not cheat a child?—Wottest thou, sir abbot, I came hither to crave pardon for myself?—I hold thy benison at a liard's value, and thine excommunication at a liard's loss. But I have scrupulous knaves to deal with, who must needs make the sign of the cross ere they whet their brands, and would fain dip in holy water before they dip in blood."

"Why, there it is," said the abbot, cooling as his antagonist warmed—"no man can

“speak to thee for thy good, but straight thou art—I know not how; thou and thy band shall have the indulgence thou seekest—on conditions well observed—a score of heretics slaughtered—or—we will not stand for a trifle. The doughty knight, Sir Samson, won his bride with an hundred scalps of the Philistine chivalry, and shall the church be less easily won for a bride?”

“I have paid that dowry too often already,” said the outlaw doggedly.

A long pause followed; and the outlaw, very slowly, and with more appearance of feeling than he had hitherto betrayed, said in a subdued voice—“Father—I remember, though I was but a youth—and would” (he sighed) “I had never been man!—I remember the dreadful fate that befell that noble unhappy lady, Marie de Mortemar.”

“She was an heretic, and accursed,” said the abbot.

“And accursed were they who did the deed,” added the robber.

“How, thou unreverend knave,” cried the abbot, “knowest thou of whom thou speakest?”

“I know them well,” said the outlaw; “they were the bishop thy guest—the deceased brother of the Lord of Courtenaye—and Count Raymond of Toulouse, then a persecutor, but now a fautor of these same heretics; and this I say, that three more ruthless lords never banded together to work their will if it might be, or to wreak vengeance if it might not. But all is over now—it was a sad and fearful deed—wild tales are told still that she is alive—Holy Mary save me from such encounter!—and that the Lord of Courtenaye less dreads the power of the heretics, than the prophecy uttered in her madness, that the *fiery arrow* should one day level the usurped towers of Courtenaye with the dust.”

As he spoke, the abbot dozed, *vino gravatus*, but waked now and then with a startled exclamation, that showed him not unconscious of the subject.

“Wake, lord abbot,” cried the outlaw,

“and pledge me to the success of my next petition.”

“Thy next petition?” said the abbot, rousing himself,—“what wouldst thou have? Art thou not already excommunicated?—absolved, I would say. Petition me no more—I will not be petitioned—I swear I will hear no petitions—my head will no longer bear them.—And now that I have thought better of thy petition (and will by no means listen to or grant it), let me hear it, and briefly—Fie, where the devil is this foolish bottle?”

“Even in thy hand, sir abbot.—As for my petition,” continued the dauntless visitor, “I must needs accompany you on your purposed visit to the castle of Courtenaye; for there I know you will bear the crusaders company, and thither I must follow in your train.”

At these words the abbot threw himself back in his chair, in an agony of consternation unfeigned. “Save me—sain me—uphold me,” he cried; but as not a saint came to aid, and his companion gave no help, or testified even the least sympathy, the abbot contrived to

recover within a reasonable space; but with his faculties, his passions and his voice returned also. "What, art thou there still, thou *petrum scandali*, thou *catharma*, or all else vile that I may call thee?" he cried;—"thou, an excommunicated outlaw, thou ride with godly churchmen and valiant crusaders?—thou—what goad but that of the fiend spurs thee on to such pursuit?—Speak, what motive canst thou urge, external, internal, or infernal?"

"Only," said the outlaw, coolly and daringly repeating the words of the bishop of Toulouse, "to behold the fair beauty of the Lady Isabelle, and to visit that enskied goddess—Nay, never cross or sain your breast, lord abbot—of your train I will be, in your van I will ride. I will disguise me so that she who bore me would not know—Alas!" (he groaned) "may *she* never know me!—I shall be your guide," he added, recovering himself, "through this wild country, and lead you through paths you wot not of to the castle of Courtenaye; this wolf-skin, with other guise-

ments I have, would bear me unknown through mine own band.—By Heaven, he sleeps!—rouse thee, lord abbot!”

“Where is the bottle?” said his host, scarcely waking.

“In thine hand, I told thee, and still unemptied; where be thine eyes, lord abbot?”

“Well nigh blinded with tears for the enormities of a sinful age,” quoth the abbot with a maudlin whimper, attempting, however, to lift the bottle.

At that moment a sound was heard that made the abbot relinquish his hold, and the bold outlaw start from his seat: it was that of the tremendous war-horn, well known in those days, whose blast seemed to shake the massive building from spire to foundation. It was instantly followed by loud knocks on the outer gate, evidently struck by a lance-head, or some stouter implement, wielded by no weak hand.

“Curse of Heaven!” cried the abbot, sinking on the floor, “the Albigeois are on us, and we are utterly spoiled; and”—lifting the cup he had dropped—“and behold, the precious

liquor spilled!—Fie on the water-drinking knaves, they never deem how thirsty our prayers for their soul-safety may render churchmen.”

“Fie on thee, sir abbot,” said the more manly outlaw; “is this a time”——

“The wisest of men hath said there is a time for all things,” quoth the abbot; “and for me, I hold this a fitting time for retreat; lo, I will ensconce me behind the tapestry of this chair—and, dost thou hear?—should the heretics force their way, remember I am a mitred abbot, and my life may be loss incomputable;—whereas thou, being an ostensible sinner, and most notorious layman”——

“As thou puttest it,” said the outlaw, “my life is a lighter loss to the church than thine own.”

“It is no time for controversy,” cried the abbot—“the heretics come; make good the pass, I charge thee, with thy life.”

Another blast of the horn was wound; the outlaw stood in consternation; and the bare-footed porter, stumbling after the revels of the

night, unbarred the gate, and a messenger (whose horse fell dead as he lit, and who was girthed from hip to shoulder,) rushed into the refectory, exclaiming, "Missives, missives, lord abbot, from the Lord of Courtenaye. His castle is beleaguered by the heretics; and he deems all fautors of that heresy who do not hasten to his aid."

The outlaw kept back, and a pause followed, till the abbot crept from behind his chair. "The monks of Normoutier are sluggards at early mass," he said, "or thou hadst never caught me watching them thus, to oversee the discipline of the house more strictly observed."

"Lord abbot," cried the breathless messenger, "the Lord of Courtenaye commends him to you, and bids you haste to his rescue. He is avertised that many a crusading lord and knight is couched within the walls of your abbey to-night; and he bids me say, they had fitter ride to his rescue than snore vigils to St. Somnus in the cells of a monk. Whether there be such a saint in the calendar, my lord abbot knows better than I."

“ Away — away !” cried the abbot, fully awakened from his drunken sleep, and trembling lest the heretics should remember how near the towers of Normoutier were to those of Courtenaye — “ Sound thine horn again till it make cloister and cell ring — sound it, as if it would split the ear, and waken the dead. The Lord of Courtenaye in danger — in mortal danger ?”

“ The Lady Isabelle in peril ?” cried the outlaw, brandishing his dagger and spear — “ perchance she may see as daring deed done for her safety by an outlaw as by a belted knight.”

“ Wind thine horn, I say — toll out the great bell,” cried the abbot in a fever of terror.

He was obeyed ; and at the toll of the ponderous bell, and the winding of the horn, whose sound, confined within the walls of the refectory, seemed to split its very roof, the sleepers started up, like men roused by the trump of doom.

Life was then full of such stirring scenes, and no man lay down with the certainty of an hour's rest, if the sound of war was in the

neighbourhood. Up started the thousand guests of the abbey at the summons. The Pelerins, who lay on the stone pavement of the court, or were dispersed through the various offices of the abbey, were the first to spring from their slumber and seize their arms; a few torches burned dimly in the courts to light them; then followed fast the glancing lights seen through the narrow windows of the galleries, as the men-at-arms and the bishop's followers hurried from their dormitories, lit by the monks. The bishop of Toulouse was in the court at the first summons, casting, as he mounted his steed, a look of reproach on his laggard attendants. The flaring torches, lit in haste at the presence of the bishop, were now blazing through the court, held by the brotherhood, who dreamed as they stood; and the court itself rung like the streets of a town besieged. The surly waking of the troops — the tumult of oaths, orders, and exclamations — the hurried and hasty confronting of men belonging to various leaders — formed a scene of discord and of din, amid which the

bishop of Toulouse's voice alone could have commanded attention, or enforced control. The men-at-arms were summoned to their respective standards — the promiscuous band required to keep in the rear, and a kind of disorderly order established ; while the abbot himself was seen to join the train, mounted on a pacing palfrey, and attended by a muffled figure in a dress which partook of that of a hunter and a peasant, to whom he whispered ever and anon, " Be true, thou false knave, for thine own sake."

" And who is this companion ?" said the bishop, as he rode by.

" A rustical fellow, but useful withal," replied the abbot ; " he knows the perplexed paths of this wild country, and will track your heretic sure as a bloodhound. Alack, my lord, your sleep, I fear, hath been broken ; for me, a few pages of St. Chrysostom or St. Jerome in my cell, and I sleep as I would after a vigil or at a mystery — *eripiunt somnum Druso vitulisque marinis.*"

At this moment the great gate was once

more flung open; its vast arches again rung with the din of steeds, arms, and men; the torch-light that flashed on its ribbed vaults of stone was contrasted with the pale light of an autumnal morning; and out rushed leader and vassal, "the horse and his rider," like a flood, through the gates (that quivered on their massive hinges with the impulse), and poured themselves tumultuously over the heath that surrounded the spacious walls of the abbey.

"To him," cried Paladour, couching his lance, "who arrives but a spear's length before me at the castle of Courtenaye, I will forfeit, if he be a knight, my steed of price; and if a man-at-arms, my glove of mail filled with agnells."

"To him," cried Amirald, spurring his steed to the rowel-head — "to him who attains a spear's length after me, I will forfeit, if a knight, my helm and corslet, and if a vassal, its value summed and paid" —

"My holy lord," cried Sir Aymer, who saw the bishop's armed heel pointed towards his steed's flank at these words, "I pray you, use

your discretion—let these mad boys run a tilt for the love of their lady Luna, and shiver lances in the clouds, an' they list; but leave thou such fierce fooleries to us youth, I pray."

"Most reverend youth, I stand checked," said the bishop, smiling. "But believest thou this tale of the peril in which the towers of Courtenaye stand from a handful of unarmed and wretched peasants?"

"If Raymond of Toulouse be in France, as true men have reported," answered the old knight, "there is no saying what enterprise he will not dare, sith all hope of his reconciliation with the church ends with his return."

"*Dieu et l'Eglise* be the word then," quoth the bishop, shouting the war-cry of the crusaders.

It was repeated by the voices of armed hundreds, breaking the morning mists that hung round their path, and the progress began—Sir Paladour and Sir Amiral still heading the van—Sir Aymer now jesting with the Pelerins, and now repeating with hoarse and quavering voice the ditty of some minstrel—

and the abbot, sore fatigued with his journey, and trembling for his doubtful and dangerous companion, who, however, faithfully discharged his office as guide.

It was twilight when they caught the first sight of the stately towers of Courtenaye and Beaurevoir; but, from the summits of the hills by which they were surrounded, a band of the Albigenses, pouring down in increasing numbers, seemed preparing, however desperate the effort, to dispute or to delay the advance of the crusaders.

CHAPTER VI.

Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold,
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, who rolled
Mother with infant down the rocks.—MILTON.

WE have to transport our readers to a very different scene, and represent to them the actual state of that persecuted people, at the sound of whose name prelates, nobles, and knights had started to arms.

The Albigeois were then very generally diffused throughout Languedoc; but, scattered and depressed by persecution, by the death (supposed violent) of the Count of Beziers, and by the frequent absence and vacillating character of Raymond of Toulouse, they in general affected conformity to the church of Rome, or at least conducted themselves so as to escape dangerous notoriety. The few, who

still held the reformed faith were dispersed among the mountains of Languedoc, awaiting their destiny amid suffering and privation, sometimes expecting aid from the Count of Toulouse, and sometimes refuge from the King of Arragon. Their numbers diminishing as their hopes declined, some rushed desperately forward to find shelter or death amid friends or foes; and of this number was the band to which we have now to introduce the reader, who, though a small and inconsiderable company, may possibly serve as a specimen of the rest, like Sterne's single captive, shut up in his dungeon. The band of the Albigeois, then, who were said to menace the towers of Courtenaye, were the remains of those who had effected their miraculous subterranean escape from Carcassone. Their harbour since had been the mountains; and from the mountains they now rushed to force their way, or perish. The rigour of their creed had not been at all softened by their mountain habits; they also boasted of having among

them the most powerful of their preachers, and the most dauntless of their unarmed warriors; and, in this last attempt, to skill they opposed ferocity, and even to victory, despair.

All their best and bravest had been despatched the preceding day as an advanced guard, not to molest or oppose the crusaders, but, if possible, to win their way to Arragon; and on the following evening a band of wretched enfeebled beings, old men and maidens, mothers and infants, were descending in slow and sad march from their mountain fastnesses — from “caves and holes, and dens of the rock,” where they had lingered in vain hope of being permitted by their persecutors to reach their land of promise, the territories of the King of Arragon.

The stoutest of their band were (as we have said) on the advance, furnished with what arms they could obtain (chiefly clubs and arrows), to ascertain or secure the safety of those who followed. The central body con-

sisted chiefly of their *barbes*, or pastors, with their wives and children; behind them the mingled and mournful band of the Albigeois. The women had wrapped their children in their scanty mantles; the men sought food for them where they could, and, failing in the search, had nothing to present but wild chesnuts and roots, and the stalks of the wild vine to roast them by when fire could be obtained; — still, however, as they boasted in language they were fond of borrowing, “there was no complaining heard in their streets.” If a famished infant died, the mother laid it on her exhausted bosom, and lay down to perish with it, as if she had been hushing her infant to slumber: — if a man fell, his wife spread her garment over him; and to those who passed and spoke, she shook her head, as if his slumber was not to be broken (that slumber she was resolved to share with him). But still, amid these dreadful scenes, there was a strong excitement kept up amid this spiritual army, where leader and preacher were synonymous terms; and the

advancing host uttered a shout, that was echoed from the hearts, if not from the voices, of the feeblest that followed. The audible prayer of thousands, issuing from rock and glen every morning,—their solemn hymn, resounding every evening from cliff to cliff, where no other sounds were heard, save the scream of the vulture, or the sweep of the blast,—the midnight murmur of the distant prayer of fathers, husbands, and sons, mingled with and sounding like the stream that roared from the hills, or rushed through the rocky gorges of the mountains,—gave comfort, if not hope, to those who heard them, and suggested to them images of undying patience and eternal hope. The very children leaned over the crags to catch the echoes; and when they ceased, the elders or barbes hoped, from the pause, that their brethren “had found the shadow of a great rock in a weary land,” and turned with sickened hearts and shrinking hands to bestow what remained of sustenance and support on the dying, the wearied, and the weak.

Such had been their progress ; but now, deserted by their bravest and boldest, the evening darkening round them without tidings, and almost without hope, and a wild and hostile country before them, its termination presented a prospect dreary enough to wither the most patient hearts ; and as they wound with painful and way-worn steps their path down a rude declivity, grasping at shrubs and tufts of sun-burnt grass for their support, many a prayer for release from unutterable misery was breathed by hearts that suppressed the unuttered feeling, and trembled lest it might be guessed by their companion, while they felt that companion echoed it from the bottom of his own. Of these men it is difficult to speak ; history has told but little of them ; and their characters, alike exaggerated by friends and foes, has left " the middle way," if the safest way, the very hardest to take. It is, however, admitted, that their manners were pure, their discipline strict, and their creed evangelical. It is also a curious, but indisputable matter of

fact, that the majority of them were as tenacious of certain texts and terms of the Old Testament, as their legitimate descendants, the English Puritans, were some centuries later; and that, like them, they assumed Jewish names, fought with Jewish obduracy, and felt with Jewish hostility, even towards those of their community who differed from them in a penumbra of their creed, whom they termed, in the phraseology they loved, the half-tribe of *Manasseh*, the spies that brought evil report of the land, the offerers of unholy incense, whom the earth would swallow up like *Nadab* and *Abihu*; with various other vituperative comparisons, with which memory or malice furnished them from *that law*, which He who came to "fulfil every tittle and jot of, *hath* fulfilled and nailed to his cross, bearing away the *law of ordinances*." Such were the differences which prevailed even among these scriptural and conscientious men, who had in a good and honest heart received the word, but among whom it brought forth according

to the nature of the soil; not forbidding the hope, that even where it was most divergent and eccentric, it might bring forth fruit to life everlasting.

By a singular coincidence, at the same moment that the armed and splendid array of the crusaders were approaching the castle of Courtenaye, the central band of the Albigois were descending from the rock into a valley, where they hoped to find shelter for the night. The moon at that moment bursting forth, shed a light on their path, and revealed the valley, or rather deep gorge, into which they wound, with its masses of grey stone, that had fallen from the precipices above, and obstructed the fractured bed of the stream that struggled through it; its caves, whose shadows, sinking far into their rocky hollows, no light could penetrate; and the silvery-tinted crags of its peaked fantastic summits, on which the scanty foliage of many an autumnal spray still smiled in the moonlight, and waved to the breeze.

The sight was lovely, but not to the eyes that now beheld it; nor is there a more withering effect of habitual wretchedness than that which deprives us of our sensibility of nature, and makes us look on all that is wild and grand in her forms and operations, as enemies with whose hostilities we must struggle, or masters to whose stern power we must submit. The foremost of the group consisted of an aged pastor, named Pierre, whom the cruelty of De Monfort had deprived of sight, and who was led by a young female, his grand-daughter—another who had taken to himself the appellation of Boanerges, an assumption well justified by the thunder of his eloquence and the extraordinary powers of his voice, which were said to be so great as even to have split rocks, and brought down their fragments on the congregation assembled beneath them;—a phenomenon that will scarce appear miraculous to those who know that amid the Alpine heights the slightest sounds will often cause the most alarming concussions of the air, and that tra-

vellers are even obliged to tie up the bells of their mules, lest the reverberation should bring down an avalanche on their heads.

With these came the deacon Mephibosheth (the only office beside that of pastor recognized in the church of the Albigeois), a man of low stature, forbidding features, intolerant zeal, and intolerable pretensions. Lame from his birth, he had adopted the name of the son of Jonathan; and after (with infinite difficulty) having slid, stumbled, or scrambled down the declivity, he contrived to join the party at the entrance of a cavern that seemed to promise them shelter for the night. Before its entrance, which was shaded with pine and larch, and mantled over with shoots of the wild vine, genistum, and clematis, stood for a moment the pastor Pierre, turning his sightless sockets towards heaven. He could no longer see the light, but he could feel that partial warmth of light of which the blind are peculiarly susceptible, and he removed his hoary and streaming hair from his forehead as if to bask in it.

Beside him, and still supporting him, stood the slender form of his daughter, her white unsandaled feet bleeding from her painful path; the hood of her coarse mantle thrown back to watch the moonlight as it played on her grandfather's face, and her dark redundant hair, escaped from confinement, almost reaching her feet as she stood.

The face, thus transiently disclosed, had the character of the light that revealed it; pure, pale, and heavenly;—the dark, thoughtful eye, — the nobly arched, but mild and patient brow, — the smile of the pale resolved lip, announced that mixture of strength and purity that is never to be found but in woman. The pastor felt from the pressure of his daughter's arm that he was near a place of rest; and another touch, still softer, made him feel (for those deprived of sight are often repaid with an exquisite sensibility in their remaining organs) that Genevieve was gazing on the moon, and tasting the calm and holy glory of her effulgence. "I feel what thou seest, my daughter,"

said Pierre, pressing her arm closer to his; but Genevieve at that moment felt him tottering from feebleness, and hastened to lead him into the cavern. Where a crowd presses together for ease or shelter, the wives whom husbands support, or the children whom their mothers bear, seldom are the slowest, and an aged man, led by a slender timid girl, is often the last; so it fared with Pierre and his daughter.

“Let me pass, I pray,” said the deacon Mephibosheth, hastening past them; “I see the sisters and brethren are preparing for the supply of our failing bodies. Wot ye not mine office?—It is meet that the deacons should serve tables, for thereunto were we elected from times apostolical.” And he pressed on.

Meantime the band had gathered some vine-stalks, and cut some peat, to which they quickly set fire; and a vivid blaze, contrasted by the darkness of the cavern, began to glare on their pale and cheerless visages. Gene-

vieve placed Pierre as near as she could to the heat, chafing his numbed hands, till, warmed by the action herself, she retired to make room for others. All this while the deacon, exclaiming, "I am faint for lack of food," went about inspecting the stinted provisions that the harassed group displayed for the refreshment of their aged, their sick, and their infants, selecting from each whatever might satiate or soothe an appetite that, like that of the horse-leech, seemed ever to cry, "Give, give."

"And thou too art faint for lack of food," said Genevieve, bending sadly over the pale and uncomplaining face of the old man as she supported his head on her knees, while his aged limbs were extended on the rocky floor of the cavern. "My father," she whispered, "would that your bed were softer!"

"My daughter," murmured the pastor, "my couch is softer than that which pillowed the patriarch when journeying to Padan-aram he placed a stone beneath his head, even in the

field of Luz, and that night saw a vision of angels, such as may visit *my* dreams, and I also find this flinty bed the gate to heaven—or that, in Egypt, where the holy Joseph slept in the dungeon of Pharaoh, the spirits of the pure watching him—or that in Susa, the ancient seat of the Persic king, where the highly favoured Daniel couched with lions on the stony floor of their den. Even in our dreary wanderings today, what thoughts, what themes, have come rushing on me like floods of inward light, till my mental eye, like my bodily, seemed exhausted and seared! But,” and he checked himself, “feelest thou no hunger, my child?”—and he pressed her hand, as if he would feel, from its faint damp touch, the answer her lips would not give.

“I too have had visions, my father,” said Genevieve, with a kind of ghastly sportfulness. “When I hungered, I thought of the brook Cherith, where the prophet Elijah was fed morn and evening by ravens: or of that palace where the holy Daniel lived on pulse,

and was nurtured even as if fed at the royal table."

"My daughter," cried Pierre, grasping her hands more earnestly, "seek not to visions or dreams—they are the glory and the joy of the sightless. Holy visions and images, unembodied and unspeakable, sometimes float before me; and God thus supplies the loss of those organs of which cruel men deprived me; but to thee all the grandeur of the broad heaven, all the brightness of the green earth, are still open. Oh! if I could once more behold creation—could I want a motive to adore creation's God——. But I err," he added, declining his head on Genevieve's knees as he spoke, while she spread her cool and fragrant fingers, like the petals of a flower, over lids that, though sightless, were burning to the touch from fatigue and excitement; and silently declining, as she sat, the offers of their scanty refreshment from the rest, lest the pastor's rest should be disturbed, sat with her eyes fixed on the entrance of the cavern, where

the full-risen glory of the moon shone, turning every crag she gleamed on to silver, and tinting the very weeds that crept around them with the hue of a pale emerald.

She gazed on the sight till her vision seemed to fail, and the sleep that fell deeply on her was but a continuation of its glories. The character of her dreams was soon exchanged for that which, from infancy, had haunted her scared and broken sleep.

There was a youth, named Amand, in the advanced party that day, whom not even the life of peril and privation they mutually had lived from childhood, had prevented from expressing towards her feelings which at first she understood not, and when she was at length compelled to do so, could not return.

His fate seemed to weigh heavy on her spirit in dreams that night. She had seen him go forth that day to certain danger, perhaps to certain death, — she had seen his mother weep, though *she* wept not; and the coldness of her last farewell reproached her in

her last waking moments, and haunted her in her visions like a crime.

Perhaps indifference towards those who love us truly, fondly, and worthily, that insolvency of the heart towards a generous creditor, is the pang that tries its chords most deeply. The figure of Amand, pale, his garments dripping blood, seemed to stand before the entrance of the cavern ; the moonlight was still there, for she had slept so recently that the images of reality still were mixed with those of her dream. The figure seemed to point to a dim perspective of confused slaughter, as if announcing the fate of her friends. Genevieve tossed and moaned on her bed of flint ; suddenly the same figure appeared, but the image was so vivid, the action so distinct, and the scene so real, that Genevieve, though asleep, felt as if it was no longer a dream, — she screamed aloud — her scream seemed echoed and prolonged by a wild and piercing cry, that rung through the cavern, as thoroughly awake, she started up, and gazing round

her, beheld the worst bodings of her dream verified.

The scene was like many that she had witnessed, but exceeding all in horror and grief. The party who had dared to meet the crusaders had suffered for their temerity; few survived, and those few were scarce enough to announce their utter discomfiture, and to tell that those who might follow were scarce enough to bear away the bodies of the dead. The group of wounded, defeated, hopeless men, darkened the centre of the cavern; around them, vividly, and even hideously pictured out by the light, hung the asking forms and eyes of mothers, wives, and daughters; and their looks were accompanied, not by words, but by cries so terrible, that Genevieve, long accustomed to sounds of woe and horror, closed her ears for a moment. The men stood sullen and discomfited, as all men after a defeat, even in the eyes of those who know victory is impossible; shrouding themselves in the darkness of the cavern, and answered in sullen reluctant

tones, — “We are but the first of the messengers of Job’s desolation; those that follow will bear tidings less welcome.” Boanerges, who never till then lifted his eyes from a manuscript copy of the New Testament, (then of an immense price,) which he had obtained by chance in the plunder of a monastery, closed the volume, and uttered, in his tremendous voice, the words, — “Mourn not as those who have no hope:” while deacon Mephibosheth, starting from his sleep, muttered something from the Song of Solomon, “of fear in the night.” Almost as they spoke, another band poured into the cavern; they were led by Mattathias, a ferocious warrior and eloquent preacher, who had stoutly, but vainly, opposed that day the clubs and arrows of his band to the lances and swords of the crusaders; and, defeated as he and his desperate followers were, they had succeeded, by dint of surpassing courage, strength, and perseverance, in bearing away the dead bodies of their companions.

There was an instant and awful silence in

the cavern. The women knelt on the earth to recognise the defaced bodies of fathers, husbands, and sons; but when they had done so — the shriek and the agony, the hope and the fear, were over — all were dumb as the dead beside whom they knelt.

They wept, but their tears felt to the weepers themselves like ice; a dreadful certainty congealed every heart and chained every tongue — no one inquired, for the object for whom her heart trembled lay before her.

Amid the prostrate band, dumb with feeling too profound and bitter for utterance, the figure of Mattathias stood sternly erect, streaming with blood, and silent as the dead around him; — leaning on his heavy club, which had been wielded not in vain that day; but those who knew him (and Genevieve was one) dreaded when that silence would end: — it ended at length. “The Lord hath forsaken us,” said the fierce warrior and intolerant zealot, — “and wherefore? because we have not kept our vow, — the vow we vowed on the

spoiling of Beziers — on the escape from Carcassonne — over the bodies of these saints who sleep let us renew it — and keep it, as I have kept it with arm and heart to-day, — from henceforth be our persecutors accursed, body and soul, life and limb; accursed be those who help or pity them — those who ——”

“Thou forgettest,” whispered the deacon Mephibosheth, “the fat things of the earth, all that grazes the field, or traverses the wood, especially their venison and their kid.”

“All that appertains to them,” said Boanerges, closing the Bible, and exalting his awful voice, — “horn and hoof, vassal and menial, from the serf who eats their bread in fear, to the waiting-damsel chambered in luxury.”

“Thou hast spoken wisely,” said the deacon, adopting the strong Hebraic metaphor, “but not warmly — not to the *hearts* of the brethren. I say, moreover, that, though prelate, peer, and knight, be banded against us; though Amalek be joined with them, and they are upholden by the children of Lot; yet they

shall be as the daughter of Babylon, wasted with misery, and blessed shall they be who rewardeth her as she hath served us."

The sharp vociferation of the deacon roused the pastor from his slumber, and, feeble and starting, he exclaimed, — "What are they now saying, my child?" Genevieve tried to hold him back for a moment, and then whispered, fearfully, "My father, they are cursing." "Then let me try to turn their curses into blessings," said the pastor, rousing his feeble strength. "Help me, thou," he cried, as staggering from weakness and blindness, he tried to rise, and Genevieve endeavoured to support him.

As they stood among the distracted group, half of them eager to join in the imprecation, half of them shuddering at it, but all stung and sore with recent anguish and menaced evil, they seemed like spiritual beings, appearing under those forms that might best soothe or solemnize the human mind, even in its fiercest exacerbations of misery and hostility; — the

holy beauty of Genevieve preaching more eloquently than many sermons to the young men and maidens, and the withered but awful figure of him whom she supported, appealing alike resistlessly to old men and children.

“My brethren,” said the aged pastor, extending his hands, as if to touch the hearts he invoked but could not reach, “wherefore are ye gathered together? what rites are these ye are assembled to celebrate? are they the spells of sorcery, the bloody ceremonies of Heathenism, or the prayers of an afflicted and persecuted church?” All were silent on a sudden at the voice of this living martyr of the faith. “Ye are assembled,” continued the pastor, “in the name of your God — the God who is love; and for what! — to curse; the horrid contradiction thrills through your ears, it thrills through your hearts. If any sufferer be here,” he cried, exalting his feeble but piercing voice, “if any be here who has suffered more than me, and claims a mournful right to dictate from the pre-eminence of misery, let him

“speak.” All were silent. “I dare not compare myself,” continued the aged man, “with him who was in sufferings often, in labours more abundant, in perils often. I have lost—,” his voice was choked, and the tears gushed from his eyeless sockets and trembled over his hoary beard, “I dare not now think of what I have lost; but if poverty and persecution, if the slaughter of my family (all but this feeble girl who tries to support me), if blindness, and the cruel spoiling of my goods, entitle me to this wretched priority, hear how I will curse your enemies.”

A deep and breathless pause followed his words; the character of Pierre the pastor stood high among the congregation, and his offer to join in this vituperative and maledictory mode of devotion, that had become, from their adoption of the Jewish phraseology, too much the habit of the Albigeois, was so new, and the excitement caused by it so strong, as for some time to suspend every other feeling.

Boanerges and the deacon Mephibosheth (for Mattathias still stood leaning on his bloody

club in the rear of the cavern, like some misshapen and sanguinary idol of ancient superstition,) hurried forwards, and irreverently and urgently pressing their hands on the shoulders of the aged man, exclaimed, "Kneel—kneel." He knelt, and the congregation was hushed. "Bless them, God!" cried Pierre; "bless them to see the many errors of their ways, and to grant to thy persecuted people the permission 'after the way they call heresy to worship the God of their fathers.'"

At these words, so different from what they had expected, a murmur deep and loud burst from the congregation, and Boanerges and the deacon, incensed and disappointed, threw themselves among the assembly, (while Mattathias stood in fierce stillness,) and fed their kindled spirits by every art of inflammation. The tumult increased, and the multitude appeared like the trees of a forest, groaning and tossing under the power of tempestuous winds. Genevieve clung to her father, pale with terrors, which he felt not. "Lead me hence," he cried, with an energy that made her start;

“stand ye there on Mount Ebal to curse—whilst I go up to Mount Gerizim to bless—even though I go alone.”

A few feeble voices, that seemed to dread their own sound, repeated, “Thou shalt not go alone;” and as Pierre returned to his retreat, he was followed by a small band of the moderate, the timid, and the irresolute,—those who were still attached to ancient authority, and those whose hearts calamity had crushed, but not embittered;—by the old, who followed their pastor because they had followed him for forty years,—and by the young, to whom the beauty of Genevieve seemed, amid darkness and desolation, to gleam like a light from heaven.

On the side of Boanerges and his party remained the sanguinary, the melancholy, the enthusiastic, and the despairing,—those whom a fierce attachment to the cause, or the cruelties of their enemies, had led to such acts of atrocity and vengeance, that, feeling reconciliation hopeless, they laboured to render it impossible,—and those who, distinguished by

the name of zealous, placed all religion in a creed of exclusion and a practice of hostility, and painted heaven to their imaginations and their hearers as a place whose joys would be exalted by their consciousness of the interminable sufferings of their persecutors and enemies.

Mattathias was called on to address them, and he prepared; but, after a long pause of internal conflict, such was the fierce intensity of his emotions, and so powerful their action on his gigantic frame, that when he at length attempted to speak, the blood gushed from his mouth and nostrils, and he fell prostrate on the floor of the cave. He was borne away; Boanerges and the deacon succeeded to the office of addressing the multitude; and by prayer, by exhortation, by every means that could sustain the energy of high-toned passion, and make excited minds fight their desperate and successful strife with exhausted bodies and worn-out hearts, did they all that long night of physical weariness and mental fever toil to feed the flame that lit it, and cherish,

amid the embers of wasted frames and wandering minds, every spark that could be kindled to a blaze, or emit, even in its ashes, a dismal and smouldering light.

Boanerges began; and when he had exhausted every topic and term of denunciation with which a well-stored memory and an implacable hostility inspired him, he was followed by the deacon, who, pointing to the few who had retired with Pierre, extended the broad anathema of Boanerges, and included within its circumference the feeble hearts and faint hands, and "sinners who went *two ways*." Then he rehearsed the bitter and emphatic curse of Meroz, and comprehended in it those who had not come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty. He proceeded, and wrought up his hearers and himself to a pitch of ferocity which has often armed fanatics with desperate and successful opposition even to disciplined troops and systematized warfare.

To the exhortation of Boanerges the congregation replied in deep assenting murmurs; but as the deacon finished, those murmurs

were exchanged for groans and howlings as wild as those of the neighbouring wolves; every period of his frantic and incendiary eloquence was drowned in the cry of his hearers; and Boanerges himself, as he saw the increased excitement, the powerful and universal action of which he had been the first propeller, trembled at the working of the machine he himself had set in motion, and "doubted whereunto this would grow." So fares it with all who presumptuously approach the ark of Revelation, and are lost in the attempt to steady its progress and direct its course ere they have ascertained their right to touch it.

In the meantime Pierre and his companions were kneeling in their remote recess; and the lights and features of scenery under which these different groups were assembled were singularly adapted to their different characters. In the interior of the cavern an ample fire had been lit; its light, flaming upward, fell vividly on the notched and ragged edges of the rocks that impended above, shaping their wild out-

lines into a resemblance of the visages of gigantic spectres seen in a feverish dream; even the light foliage of the shrubs that started from among their interstices, and the pendant and waving vegetation of the weeds that clustered round them, lost all the beauty of their verdure and forms in that strong unnatural light, and seemed like the dark webs that wave in the chambers of sorcery. Below, the glare was reflected from fierce faces, marked with fiercer passions, obstinacy and rage, hatred and despair, and that peculiar expression of religious hostility that combines all and surpasses all. In the little sanctuary of Pierre's associates there was no fierce and fiery light, no passion or tumult; they knelt on the floor of stone, and the moon, gleaming through a chasm in the rock, was the only light that fell on faces, mild, pale, and sorrowful,—on clasped hands, heads meekly depressed, and bodies, in whose deep and tranquil prostration you might see that hearts were bowed down also; and amid the cataract of sound that thundered from their fiercer brethren, the still

flow of their pure prayer was heard to murmur sounds only of love and of peace, of submission and of sorrow. It seemed as if the accusing and deprecatory spirits were on their flight towards heaven together, and the still small voice of the latter proclaimed that his petition was accepted.

It was now past midnight; the fires had sunk low, the moonlight was withdrawn, and the stormy congregation of Boanerges, and the placid followers of Pierre, alike sought a refuge from the stings of many wants and sufferings in slumber. The gleam of the embers shed a sullen and wearied light at length on hands locked in defiance or in supplication—now unclasped;—on eyes that had flashed with the light of every passion that can dilate or inflame their orbs—now closed;—on forms agitated by every spirit that can shake and convulse them most fearfully—now still as infancy; all buried in a sleep like that of death: rage and grief, talent and mediocrity, power and weakness, slumbered beside each other. The stormy Boanerges,

and the hot deacon, and all their followers and favourers, with all their various shades of discrepancy and contradiction, were mute; as deep a repose was on the few followers of the pastor; it was a living churchyard. Genevieve alone, like the angel of the resurrection, sat watching till the morning.

CHAPTER VII.

Fate sits on these dark battlements, and frowns,
And, as the portals open to receive me,
Her voice in sullen echoes through the courts
Tells of a nameless deed.

WALPOLE'S *Mysterious Mother*.

THE desperate courage of Mattathias and his followers had delayed, though not rendered doubtful, the strife with the crusaders. Many fell, and the few who survived fled to their mountain retreat, their flight well covered by their dauntless leader, who fought to the last, and, while the flying party were mingling with the mists of the mountains that shrouded them, still kept his face toward the foe. His arrow was the last that flew—and it never flew without quivering in a foeman's heart; his club was the last that was wielded—and it never fell without crushing a man-at-arms to

the earth; his curse on the cowards that fled, and the foes that opposed, was the last sound that thundered over the hills, amid which the flying Albigeois seemed, like spectres, hastening to hide themselves amid the deepening shades of the mountains and of the night.

Paladour and Amirald, who had dealt about with their lances and swords as boys would with their staves amid a heap of bulrushes, grew weary of the carnage, and toward twilight rode apart from the field and stuck their lances in the ground, while they viewed with some amazement the deeds of a minstrel, apparently the most eccentric and dissolute of his profession, who had all day long sung the loose strains that pleased the ear of Sir Aymer; and when the conflict (if it could be termed so between armed knights and unarmed peasantry) commenced, had snatched a weapon from one of the bishop's attendants, and dealt about his blows with such mortal force, that he scarce gave a wound where he did not leave a corse. At the end of the business he caught up his

harp, and, tuning it as he might, began to sing some antique ditty, apparently careless to whom he sung, or whether his strain was noted or not. There was an insouciance about his general deportment that accorded with this abrupt transition from ferocity to levity. He was not old, though he looked so; intemperance, anticipating the approach of age, had done its full work on him; his hair was white, and his hands shrivelled; his garb too, was such as betokened rather the attire of a poor wandering minstrel, than of the pampered favourite of a lordly castle; and from time to time there was an expression of insanity in his sunk eye, and something like the reality of it in the stubbornness with which he refused all solicitation to sing the songs that his companions called for, and persisted in chanting the wildest and loosest lays that even minstrel uttered. They were, however, sufficiently acceptable to Sir Aymer, whose admiration was not diminished by the valour of which he gave such unexpected proofs, and who, riding up to the young knights, exclaimed,

"This is a brave minstrel!—Where, fellow, didst thou learn to wield the harp and sword together?"

The minstrel, instead of answering, struck some vague chords on his harp, and then replied, "In the service of a noble valiant lord, whose name I dare not utter now; there I learned that the brave alone can worthily sound the actions of the brave, and that none should dare to lay finger on the harp, who could not lay hand on sword and lance."

"And who was thy valiant lord?" said Sir Aymer.

"One whom I dare not name, though his towers are near;—let the bishop of Toulouse tell ye whose they were once."

"Thou darest not name Raymond of Toulouse, an heretic and accursed of the church," said the bishop, as he rode by.

"*Thou* hast named him," answered the minstrel in a suppressed voice, "though I dare not; those towers once were the abode of Raymond of Toulouse; a neighbouring retreat, where he had placed his family for

safety — alas ! not a stone of it is left ; the smoke of its last flame was slaked by the blood of his wife and infant children ; and ever since that day of blood and death," he exclaimed, " I have been all for mirth and jollity ;" and he preluded wildly on his harp. " Ever since that day," he repeated, striking his harp so strongly that some of the strings gave way —

" Thou hast broken the strings of thy harp, fellow," said Sir Aymer.

" It was in memory of the day the strings of the minstrel's heart were broken," said the player —

" Who busied himself the strings withal,
To hide the tear that fain would fall."

" And whose service boasts thy minstrelsy now ?" said Sir Aymer, laughing as the minstrel wept.

" I am in the service of the Lord of Courtenaye, the tenant of yon castle," said the minstrel.

" What !" cried Sir Amirald, advancing as they rode, " thou the follower of Raymond of

Toulouse, and now the menial of the Lord of Courtenaye, his deadliest foe?"

The minstrel, without answering, struck a few wild chords on his dismantled harp; then suddenly raising his head and his voice, "Hadst thou ever loved the harp, sir knight," he said, "never wouldst thou cease to love the spot where its chords were first struck and echoed. The stones of that castle," he cried, pointing to it—"the weeds that burst through its walls—the very waters of its moat—the rugged battlements of its walls, are dearer to me than all or aught but *this*"—and with enthusiastic expression he kissed his harp as he spoke. "With this," he cried wildly, "I can raise palaces of amethyst and rivers of silver, and flowers of hue and odour that shame paradise.—But such visions mock me," he continued in a dejected tone;—"give me the dark-grey stone, the heavy water, the weeping and tufted weed, and the dim twilight that sheltered me as I sung of themes then praised, now forgotten—give me my dreams of childhood back again, when my harp and

I were alone the tenants of a world of vision and felicity. Nay, were not one stone of those walls left on another—were the streams flowed away, and the trees rooted from the hills, this spot would still be populous with forms and sounds—would still have tenants for me.”

“ And who are they ?” asked the bishop.

“ The dead,” replied the minstrel.

“ The fellow raves !” said Sir Aymer, retreating.

“ Sing us some strain of that lovely minstrelsy thou talkest of,” said Sir Amirald.

“ And look that thou usest virtuous words, thou ungodly fellow,” said the abbot of Normoutier, who retained all the spleen then felt by churchmen against mimes and minstrels, with whom they were at deadly feud for their dramatic superiority ; “ but I forewarn thee, let thy speech be decent ; for what saith the text ?—*Castum pium poetam esse decet ipsum—versiculos nihil necesse est.*”

“ Sing, fellow, as thou art commanded,” said the bishop of Toulouse haughtily.

"Not till my master commands me," said the minstrel firmly.

"Thy master is absent."

"No, my master is here," said the minstrel, bowing to Paladour.

"Does he rave?" said Sir Aymer, while the bishop of Toulouse steadily regarded the speaker.

"No," answered Vidal, (for that was his name;) "if there be truth in words or faith in hearts, the broad lands he treads, the towers that rise to his view, and I and all the vassals beneath their roofs, are his, and his alone."

"What!" said Sir Aymer, "art thou one of those songsters that will be prophets too, and tell mad tales of the fiery arrow that is to pierce yonder towers."

"It is on its flight already," said Vidal emphatically.

"What meanest thou?" cried Paladour with amazement, not unmingled with stronger feelings.

"Mean, sir knight?—Nothing," said Vidal

vacantly ; “ what meaning have minstrels and madmen?—Nought, save lies and dotage.—They say Cassandra’s fate was hard, but what was the fate of those who despised her ?”

“ This is somewhat strange,” whispered Sir Aymer to the bishop.

“ Strange !” replied the prelate, “ that an half-crazed minstrel should lie, and a romanceful youth should listen ?—Hark ! he is going to sing again.” And Vidal, as he spoke, burst into a different strain.

Ballad.

Round Padua’s towers the clouds that rolled,
The parting sun had tinged with gold :
Her spires are reddening with his rays,
Her domes are wrapt in purple blaze. —
And lo ! as fades the lingering light,
A thousand joy-fires burst to sight ;
And her streets, beneath the kindling ray,
Burn with the busy glow of day. —
In tower and spire the bells are ringing ;
In holy domes the mass is singing ;
From warder’s hold the clarion braying ;
In lady’s bower sweet music playing :
Minstrel and mime alternate chaunt
Of love and war and wild romaunt —

Tales of the might of Charlemagne,
Or British Arthur's fairy reign.
The light Morisco twirls his bell,
The jongleur plies his cunning well :
Pardoner and pilgrim, through the crowd,
Vaunted their godly gear aloud ;
Or turned to hail with wondering eye,
The masquer's torch-light revelry.
They come, in mystic pageant quaint,
Paynim and prophet, fiend and saint ;
And classic legend blent uncouth
With mysteries deep of sacred truth :
While from the latticed casement high,
Roof, battlement, and balcony,
The clustered gazers fling below
Their bending torches' umbered glow,
While, with each shadow's fitful change,
They image forth expression strange.

'Mid the mixed group beneath, —
Now tinge a pilgrim's dark grey cowl, —
Now flash upon a demon's scowl ;
Flit from the churchman's tonsure white
To steely form in mailed might ;
From laughing beauty's up-cast eye
To tortured saint in agony ;
From gibing dwarf, and antic folly,
To tapered shrine and relique holy,
And cross upreared, in awful state,
Rich and red with the precious weight,
Of him who died the death. —

Thus did in truth the pageant seem,
Like minstrel lover's haunted dream.

Yet might the bookman's thoughtful mind
Apt food amid the triflers find ; —
Childhood was there, with wondering cry,
And restless step, and flashing eye ;
And manhood grave, intent the while
To taste the joy, but veil the smile ;
And hoary eld, with joyless eye,
 Marvelling, with retrospective moan,
How younger sights such charms can spy
 In what no longer charms their own. —

Sir Paladour rode on as the minstrel sung, full of those heavy thoughts that a mysterious word or an unexpected incident never failed to stir up like a host of sleeping enemies within ; and Amirald rode with him in sad and wondering silence, till his companion, with the strong habit of solitary suffering, spoke aloud. " And wherefore," said he at length — " wherefore is every step of my earthly progress marked by presages and voices that, though of the living, sound as if they issued from the grave ? — The voice, the song of that minstrel, recall to me the images of years in which I seem to have lived ; — I could, methinks, repeat every word of his lay, echo every note of his harp ; — but unless so touched, every

chord of my early memory is broken, tuneless, and irresponsible.—Hast thou ever had, Amirald, such thoughts, such feelings?”

Amirald answered that such communications might be; but he believed that they were bestowed by blessed spirits, and were given as tokens of good.

“Alas!” said Paladour, “no tokens are on me for good—no blessed spirits attend me, I could swear to that minstrel’s voice—I could swear that in infancy I sat on his knees and listened to it. Hadst thou ever such thoughts of a life that began before thou hadst living consciousness—of a power that awed, a vow that bound thee even then?”

“I have had such *dreams*,” said Amirald.

“Tell me thy dreams then, and I will tell thee my life; for my life is as a dream, and thy dreams perhaps resemble my life,” said Paladour: and Amirald was about to listen, when the minstrel sung again: and the words, though totally unconnected with the preced-

ing, seemed to seize irresistibly the ear of Paladour.

Ballad continued.

WHEN their red light the torches lent,
They feasted full in the victor's tent :
And ever, with loud and lavish boast,
The stranger youth's acclaim they raise, —
For wonder vanquished jealous pride,
And joy had made them prone to praise —
The stranger youth, who sought that morn
Their leader, with petition high,
To bear his banner in the fight,
And plant it there in blood — or die ;
And how, when chiefs of bearded might
Deemed it foul scorn, that stripling light,
Who never, as his words confess'd,
In sportive tourney's bloodless jest
So much as shivered spear, —
Dared now, in dread and mortal fight,
Of chief assayed and well-fleshed knight
To hold himself the peer :
How the proud blush of conscious worth
His hero features burned,
And his cheek, so pale with awe and hope,
To speaking crimson turned :
And while he pleaded yet, and prayed,
And still the pausing chief delayed,
The standard from its staff he tore.

And where upon the heath's dim bound,
Rung conch and cymbal's heavy sound —
And faintly rose the Paynim moon,
In dim eclipses to set so soon —
Where the dark battle mustered well
The turbaned bands of Ishmael —
 Headlong in desperate charge he bore :
Then closed around the Paynim bands
 In unavailing strife ;
For lo ! a thousand weapons aimed
 Against a single life ! —
And there are lightning lance, and spear,
 And sabre-flash, and scimeter,
And arrows are hailing from the rear,
 And javelin glance like falling star.
Then sprung each warrior to his steed,
To aid their champion at his need ;
 And as the heath they win —
Like oarless bark on ocean tost —
Now seen, now sunk, now safe, now lost —
 His victim head was seen.
Not heaven itself, in this dread hour,
To save that desperate life has power, —
When loud was heard the blood-choked cry,
That shouted — " God and victory ! "
 And ere the aids can come,
Through brand and blood his way he wore,
To earth the struggling foemen bore,
And on to meet the rescue sprung,
And mid the shouting champions flung
 The banner blessed by Rome. —

Like lightning that precedes the storm,
Ere the clouds dark battle form,
Was that wild sally's desperate strife;—
Then, like the whirlwind in its sway,
Joined the dark hosts in dread array,
That parted but with parting life —
And he who still aloft that day,
With bloody hand, the banner bore,
Who, thrice that day, his bold breast threw
The Christian leader's life before ;
And from the yelling Paynim's grasp
Their waning moon in triumph tore ;
Amid the assembled chieftains proud,
In that dread day's tremendous close,
While his proud eyes' new-lighted fire
Still lightened on his breathless foes,
Low kneeling 'neath his leader's sword,
Knight-banneret arose :
" And bear henceforth," the chieftain said,
" The *cross of blood* upon thy shield ;
And mayest thou still, as on this day,
The sword of God resistless wield :
And saints still give thee faith in death,
And valour in the field."

" Not the oaths of the holiest on earth —
not the attestation of a descended angel,
though he left heaven for the purpose," cried
Paladour with vehement solemnity, " could

make me believe I had not heard those words, those sounds, before, — though amid scenes I cannot, cannot recall. Oh those associations," he cried, with increasing emotion, "that, far seen, and faintly remembered, we struggle after through mist and darkness, and grasp only their shadows — those spectres of departed memory that rise before us when its essence is gone for ever!"

"And whatever may be the mystery of thy fate," said Amirald, "mine can parallel it."

"Speak it, then," said Paladour, abruptly.

"I was an orphan, left exposed at the gates of the Lord of Courtenaye: some mark, that my flesh still bears, announced me not of ignoble birth: thus I was committed to the charity or cruelty of the Lord of Courtenaye. But amid all the indignities my proud heart was forced to crouch to, I felt he hated because he feared me."

"There my early fate parallels thine," said Paladour; — "I too was left an orphan, reared by an obscure burgher, — and, for the rest, I cannot for shame speak it; even the

dark reminiscences that haunt me, are a relief to the gloomier picture of my boyish sufferings ——”

“My cheek still burns,” interrupted Amiral, “at the recollection of the unworthy, the unutterable usage I met with in yonder towers, whose lord trembled at the presence of the boy he sentenced to vile punishment. I fled the castle: the bounty of the Lady Isabelle, generous as she is beautiful, furnished me with the means of purchasing steed and armour; and at the battle of Bovines, — but thou hast heard that tale; — and now, with this good lance, this gallant steed, a light bosom, and a loyal heart, I am prepared to run my career in this wild tilting world, as unconscious how it may terminate as how it began.”

“Such fate too hath befallen me,” said Paladour; “and it is marvellous how the early destinies of strangers should thus agree. One would think that we were both enchained, from our cradles, in one link of suffering, — but thine hath been twined with flowers, and mine forged of iron.”

"I have sometimes thought we might be brothers," said Amirald, pausing.

"I have often wished that we were," said Paladour. "Hark!" he exclaimed, as Vidal rushed past them, and plunged into the gloom of the deep-spreading valley that lay below, — striking, even in that moment of partial frenzy, the broken chords of his harp with a master hand, — "hark, how he thunders into the vale, hand and harp, foot and voice, in deep and terrible accord! — is it a mortal minstrel that sweeps the strings?"

"How sweetly," said Amirald, listening to his own associations, — "how sweetly they mingle with the blasts that wail round these dark hills, deepening in rich sadness as the darkness deepens! Methinks, while listening to such wild minstrelsy by twilight like this, I could forego all thoughts of war and fair renown, and wish to live for ever amid these pleasant and solitary places, dwelling with the images that such sounds could still raise before me."

"The images that rise before me," said

Paladour, with a melancholy smile, "are of a darker hue ; — but what are thine?"

"There is but *one*," said Amirald, with enthusiasm ; "that of a form which sometimes floats between the evening clouds and me, so softly, so lucidly, that though her beautiful face be real, (I have beheld its portrait, as I avouched at the abbey of Normoutier,) the figure, as it ever floats on the evening clouds, to mine eye seems more of heaven than of earth : I see the stars through her form — her veil is of light ; there is a filmy transparency between us as I gaze, that I deem her a saint, though, alas! —"

"I too see the form of a female, — but" — Paladour became convulsed as he spoke, but still repeated, — "and I too see the form of a female."

"Heaven comfort thee!" said Amirald, reining up his steed, that Paladour's head might sink on his shoulder. "Wilt thou seek to the bishop of Toulouse, or the reverend abbot? they bear holy reliques that might fight with the dark thoughts that beset thee——."

"No," cried Paladour, raising his head. "Those sounds have ceased, — those sounds to which I can give no name — affix no meaning — save that they madden me to hear them. This pale light, those dark hills, our gloomy progress, will restore me. My spirit swells amid a scene like this, as thine would, Amirald, under a sunny sky and a bowery landscape."

The scene was, indeed, such as might have inspired or cherished the darkest thoughts. Unlike the other fortified castles of the age, the castle of Courtenaye, as it was then called, though it had formerly belonged to Raymond of Toulouse, seemed built rather for safety than hostility. It lay in a vast hollow, surrounded by many hills or mountains, that, rising one above another, and winding amongst themselves into endless and shadowy intricacy, defied the skill of the traveller. Where these mountains formed a hollow sweep, their summits retiring behind each other, the castle of Courtenaye arose like a mountain of stone that had fallen into the valley; but still, from

its commanding magnificence and vast extent of structure, seeming the master alike of valley and of mountain. The youths paused and reined up their steeds to gaze below.

The dark and flying troops of the Albigeois had long disappeared from the summits of the hills, — the mists of night began to deepen and mingle there, like a dark advancing host in aid of those who fled, — the mountain-summits themselves, partially shrouded by the descending clouds, and the rising vapours of the valleys, lay like a giant army in the heavens, mingling their huge and darkly-defined masses with those of the clouds that settled heavily on them. Above the castle, as it stood, one broad and burning gleam of western light still lingered, giving to the towers and battlements the appearance of being in a blaze; and this appearance was heightened by the contrasted darkness of the mountains, so that a red and lowering banner of vengeance and hostility seemed to stream over the pinnacles of the castle, while all around lay in darkness. Paladour and Amirald rode into the valley.

"Here we part," said Amirald, as they now descried the many-twinkling lights from the casements and loopholes, and the torches that began to blaze from the battlements, as tokens of invitation to the crusaders: "Here we part;—on the wild and dark hills that surround us would I rather seek for shelter, than couch in the towers of that felon lord."

"On their bleakest points would I rather rest," said Paladour, "than in yonder towers. The unbidden impulse that hath swayed me all my life seems now more potent than ever. I tell thee, sir knight, no armed host, with lances couched and banners spread, could strike such terror into my soul as yonder castle with its dark battlements and towers. This is no dream of fancy—no fond imagining of a morbid mind brooding over its own dark workings: no;—it is something that nature warns me from, by those dark but ceaseless intimations (aided by many external bode-ments), and yet seems to impel me to—I know not what impulse to obey,—I stagger beneath the burden of my destiny;—fate is

beckoning me from every battlement, — something more than human weighs me down ;— nothing human ever weighed me down before.”

As he spoke he fell from his horse, and lay prostrate on the earth. Sir Amirald unclasped his helmet, undid his gorget, and bared his throat and bosom to the air. In doing so, he discovered on the shoulder of Sir Paladour a trace which, though his eye glanced at it but for a moment (dimly seen as it was), he started to behold ; — he bore a similar one himself, — not merely similar, but so exactly the same, that it was evident they must have been impressed by the same hand, and for the same purpose. The slight disparity of their years was no disproof of this conjecture. Paladour had indeed the finished form of youth on the confines of manhood : Amirald’s form had the growing graces of a youth of eighteen ; and often had he, when a page in the castle of Courtenaye, consoled, under many indignities, his young heart of pride with the mark that his shoulder bore, deeming it impressed, at his birth, by those whom he might be proud to

recognise as his parents, and who might be proud to recognise their child. As these visions of past ignominy and future glory, associated as they seemed to be with this singular discovery, passed rapidly and brightly across his imagination and eye, young Amiralde had the precaution to throw the silken scarf over Paladour's shoulder; a moment afterwards Paladour breathed, and his hand sought for and felt with strong affectionate pressure the hand of Amiralde.

"Dismiss those fellows," whispered Paladour, (imagining, like all who recover from a swoon, that he was surrounded by a multitude,) — "do thou alone remain near me."

"We are alone," said Amiralde, pressing his hand.

"Amiralde," said Paladour, faintly, "wherefore am I thus overcome? Have I borne me like a coward to-day?"

"Oh no!" said the light-hearted Amiralde, "thou wast like the eagle of Jove in flight and pounce; there was blood enough on thy beak and talons to warrant thee the cup-

bearer of the Thunderer ; but now thou hast to encounter a sort of doves — Venus's doves, I deem. Shrinkest thou from such encounter, thou craven? Mine eagle," he added cheerfully, "bear away thy plume and breast unruffled from such conflict ; and thou shalt be my bird of birds — yea, my phoenix."

They were now beneath the walls of the castle.

"Wilt thou leave me now, — now, in this untold conflict of horrid thoughts?"—said Paladour, raising himself from the earth.

"Sir Paladour," replied the youth, springing on his steed, "claim mine arm and brand in thine hour of peril — mine heart in thine hour of kindness and brothership (if Heaven allow us another) — and my life at *any hour* — all shall be thine, at thy lightest summons ; but ask me not to enter the walls of this castle. There is mystery in thy fate ; there is mystery also in mine, which I cannot now reveal to thee. Perchance the fiery arrow hath a *two-fold flight*."

The tramp of his armed steed's hoofs

drowned his last words as he departed : and Sir Paladour, who had resumed his casque and gorget, joined the other crusaders as they approached the entrance of the castle.

Amirald pursued his course among the hills, with that uncertainty of purpose and of destination that has its charms for the romantic and enterprising,—sometimes murmuring a love-sonnet, and sometimes listening, amid the echoes of the hills, for the sound of a convent bell, where he might claim hospitality for the night. As pausing thus, from the summit of a neighbouring eminence he took a last look of the procession of the crusaders as they wound in long and dim array through the portals of the castle, his ears were struck by a cry suddenly and forcibly suppressed ;—he listened — it was repeated — and the voice was evidently a female's : there needed no more to inspire Amirald, who, immediately couching his lance, spurred his steed in the direction from whence the cries proceeded.

CHAPTER VIII.

Lo, at the close of a stormy day,
They saw a proud castle among the trees.

MOORE.

THE Lord of Courtenaye had watched that evening the conflict between the crusaders and the Albigeois, from the highest turret of his castle, scarcely feeling himself in safety even there. When at length, however, the crusaders poured onward, like a river in flood between the rushes on its banks that it sweeps away in its progress, and held their course towards the castle, he descended from his turret, and prepared to receive them at the entrance of his banquet-hall.

He was lit on his way by his constant attendant, Thibaud, (who bore a torch through the dark and vaulted passages which they had

to traverse before they reached the portals of the castle,) and whose visage, though he was silent, bore a meaning his lord did not seek to interpret.

We hold a feast to-night," said the Lord of Courtenaye, with a kind of officious restlessness, — "is all prepared?"

"All is prepared," answered the attendant; "but there is a guest coming thou hast not reckoned on."

"And who is *he*," said the Lord of Courtenaye, who had but one object for the concentrated terrors of his mental vision.

"*She* will visit thee to-night," said Thibaud. — "She hath been seen on the hills this day; and wherever war or woe chance to be, there is she, sure as the raven to prey on the dead, or the spoiler to strip the slain. Moreover, the wise astrologer who hath watched, fasting and pure, in the highest tower of the castle, since the dawn of morning, hath declared that the lord of the ascendant is combust and retrograde, and that Almoden is cusped in the seventh house."

And the man, as he spoke, shook as if he was uttering a necromantic spell, though obviously (from his misuse of the terms of astrology) ignorant of their meaning.

“Hold the torch higher!” said his lord, impatiently, “I cannot see my way.” The vassal flashed it full in his eyes.

“Lord of Courtenaye,” he cried, stopping with an air of savage resolution, “I have graduated long in thy school of perdition. I have learned my trivium and my quadrivium in it. For a hasty handling of sword or dagger in my mood, or at the command of my liege lord, absolution may be lightly won. — Show me a throat to be gashed, or a heart to be pierced, and where wilt thou find stronger arm than this?” — and he bared it, — “or keener blade than this?” — and he brandished it before his shrinking lord! — “but for your deeds of wizardry, your dark dealings in yonder chamber of sorcery, I scorn them with my heels, and spit at them with my tongue. Meet the foul hag if thou wilt, but thou shalt meet her alone; — I witness your ghastly conferences

no more. What, — I have a soul to be saved, — you must needs bear a conscience, Lord of Courtenaye?"

"But hush, I pray thee, Thibaud," said the lord, "have I not explained to thee the difference between magic lawful and unlawful; betwixt the evocation of spirits by periapts and words of power, and foul and fatal compact with the master of evil? Thou gavest up thine error, heldest it no longer that it was a damned art, and wast a believer in the virtues of fumigation, so grateful to the planetary spirits?" —

"Peace with thy wild jargon," said his companion, whom familiarity in crime had rendered insolent. "My blood is thine, and it hath often been shed in streams to spare the drop that trembles at thy craven heart;—my life is thine, for I am thy sworn vassal — my liege-lord, — but my soul never shall be thine."

"But hear me, Thibaud," said the Lord of Courtenaye, "the arrival of her whom thou darest is horary and auspicious, — the night advances — ere it wane, I have been told, and

feel, of a surety, that my mortal enemy will be here — whether he come in human form or no, I wist not; but hark, there be trampling of steeds and riders over our heads, — the crusaders come, and I must bend up my spirit to receive and greet them as I may, — we will talk further of this business at midnight——.”

“Nor at midnight — nor ever,” said Thibaud. “Command me in aught else; but for that sin for which men burn both here and hereafter, you shall hold me excused. I quailed not at murder, — not even thy bro——”

“The smoke of thy torch chokes me,” said the Lord of Courtenaye, dashing it from the hand of his attendant, and emerging from the dark passage through which they had wound to a corridor that opened on the court of the castle.

The crusaders were pouring into it, and seemed, from their loose array and joyous colloquy, more like huntsmen returning from the chase than from a field of battle. The loud laugh — the careless bearing of their arms — the minglement of 'squire and knight, of monks and men-at-arms, — the inter-cross-

ing of the banners of chivalry and of the church, — the pennons of the knights, with their armorial bearings, floating and conflicting in the air, with the standard of the cross, upheld by the attendants of the bishop of Toulouse, gave to victory the air of a pageant. It was dim twilight as they entered; the vast towers of the castle seemed mingling with the mases of cloud in the western hemisphere, nor was it easy to distinguish the remoter buildings of the castle from a heap of misty and volumed vapour; or the clouds that impended over them, with their sombrous masses and shifting pinnacles, from an edifice of magic reared in the air. Light enough remained to distinguish forms, though not colours; so there was a dim and shadowy magnificence overspreading the group, and as its torrent swept onwards towards the vast arch of the portal, it seemed like a river rushing to bury itself with all its waves beneath the mouth of a cavern. But as they entered the inner court all was changed in a moment; — four hundred torches, borne by vassals and domestics, turned the twilight

into noon — vermillion and saffron giving them a brilliant and almost magical lustre — heralds and pursuivants, with tabards of cloth of gold, and embroidered banners depending from their trumpets, gave note of welcome, and hailed each distinguished crusader by name as he rode into the court — every corridor and casement around did “blaze with lights and bray with minstrelsy.” The songs of minstrels and troubadours were mingled with the soft sounds of lutes and the softer of female voices, while the fair songstresses scattered flowers and essenced waters from the casements and loopholes through which their bright eyes and necks of snow were displayed. The Lady Isabelle herself, with her two favourite damsels and her aged gouvernante, seated on the summit of an interior tower, where four torches of perfumed wax blazed around her, waved her silken scarf in token of welcome; while every knight, as he rode by “bare-headed, lower than his proud steed’s neck,” bowed in proud and graceful obeisance; and the Lord of Courtenaye, in the triumph of

his feudal pride and individual vanity, forgot his crimes, his dangers, and all — but his terrors — yet had he heard certain passages among the guests for whom he had prepared so magnificent a reception, that vanity would have had but slender aliment.

“ This fool,” said the bishop, gazing on the splendour that surrounded him, “ ever loved the pomp that follows greatness more than greatness itself.” Then turning to the abbot of Normoutier, “ Meseems the Lord of Courtenaye wills us to play in a pageant to-night — what part wilt thou play, lord abbot ?”

“ Marry,” said the literal abbot, as two ecclesiastics helped him from his palfrey ; “ I am clean spoiled for play or pageant — alas, I am shrewdly galled — but if pastime be going on, pity it were that it were marred ; if it be a mystery or such, I will think no scorn to bear my part — let your holy lordship play the devil, and I will play the fool.”

“ Thou hast spoken well,” said the bishop, with a prophetic smile ; “ but I devise to play my part on a wider stage than this.”

“The castle-hall is ample wide,” answered the abbot, puffing on. “Pray God there be a cushion on the settle after all; for what saith the text, *percussit eos in*” ——

“Speed thee on,” said the bishop, alighting, “or thou wilt be too late to play the fool.”

“I am never too late to play the fool — I doubt not to do my part — for, as a father hath it ——”

“I do believe the text, spare us the gloss,” said the bishop.

“*Nec lusisse pudet, sed non incidere ludum,*” said the inveterate abbot, “I deem it apt authority to prove it is never too late to play the fool.”

Meantime the crusaders, with the bishop of Toulouse at their head (equally from respect to his military talents as to his ecclesiastical dignity) pressed onward to the banquet-hall; and Paladour, who followed among the rest, seemed to himself to be plunging into his grave. The force of his bodily sensations, the agony of his mental horrors, drove him on among the crowd as if he were an automaton,

a lifeless breathless thing; and while all eyes were fixed on his towering form and conspicuous armorial, he gazed on all with glassy rayless eye, nor was he conscious that he was a spectator of the magnificent banquet that swam before his darkened vision, till he was roused by the voice of Sir Aymer, who demanded, half jocularly, half reproachfully, "What, is this a guise to meet ladies withal, clad in armour as if thou wert tilting in the lists? Ladies must lack mirrors when they need to see themselves in corselets and brigantines—it is a mere reproach to their firewomen."

"I had forgot me," said Paladour, absently, "or I had not appeared thus—and yet I know not—I feel as if within these walls I were best wear armour."

"Armour!" repeated Sir Aymer, "what! hast thou no bravery to honour the feast withal—no cloak of velvet with a golden guard—no nice foppery of the Italian guise? By the mass, a taper leg in cloth hose, and a straight back in a satin doublet, were worth a

score of your hacked gorgets and vant-braces. What avails a taper leg in a boot of steel, a white neck if it be buckled in mail, a curled head if it be hid in a helmet?—Youth, let thine eyes be opened, and the virtues of tissue be revealed unto thee.”

“ My mails contain some suits indifferent costly,” said Paladour; “ but the disquietude of my mind — I would say the negligence of my knave ——”

“ Away, away to thy mails — examine their contents — and if but a point, a thread be missing, torture thy ’squire; put all the damsels in the castle to a rack of thine own devising, and strain it to thine utmost strength!”

“ How merrily thou talkest, Sir Aymer,” said his sad companion.

“ Now heaven forefend,” said Sir Aymer, with an expression of ludicrous solemnity, “ for here be waged the loves and lives of two doughty knights on the issue — go, array thee in thy panoply — here is a wasted leg to thy full calf — a narrow chest to thy ample shoulders — a bald forehead to thy thick dark

locks — in the teeth of such deadly odds, I defy thee to combat; go, accoutre thee as thou mayest, and the lady Isabelle be at once judge and prize of the field — but mark me — so speed me tissue and velvet, if I make thee not an example to all presumptuous youth, no masses shall be able to redeem my tailor's soul from purgatory !”

“ I skill so little in gauds,” said Paladour, “ that thy tailor's soul is in small danger.”

As he prepared to retire, the splendid retinues of the Lord of Courtenaye entering the hall made him pause: though he was in armour, and concealing himself among the crowd, he thought the eye of the Lord of Courtenaye rested on him for a moment. The train passed on, and he was almost alone at the door; he cast back one glance on the splendid hall, and some shadows of faint reminiscence rose before him — he thought he had beheld that place before, and struggled with the recollection, but could not dismiss it.

Meanwhile the guests crowded fast and frequent into the hall, the costume of which,

rude as it might appear to modern refinement, boasted a wild barbaric splendour with which modern refinement could not dare to vie. The light effused from the torches of the attendants, who arranged themselves at the backs of the guests as they sat, fell on the rich liveried habits emblazoned with the arms of Courtenay and Beaurevoir; and on sheets of tapestry suspended round the walls, where figures, though uncouthly delineated, glowed in all the richness of silk and silver. The subjects were grouped, perhaps, with more than poetical license: the giant Termagant (a corruption probably of Tres-magne) was conflicting with Goliath of Gath — Bathsheba was ministered to by the three Graces in her bath — and Cupid was aiming his mischievous darts at king David the while. In another compartment, the sacrifice of Iphigenia was paralleled with that of Isaac, and Abraham and Agamemnon (who had probably never met before save in the head of a mythological nun who wove the tapestry), were portrayed in the same panel, knife in hand; while, by some

singular confusion of appropriate situations, Diana was carrying away Isaac, and a ram caught by the horns was butting away amid the foliage that wreathed the classic altar of the Grecian sacrifice. It could not be said that these persons, in extenuation of their manifold absurdities, had nothing to say for themselves, for from their mouths issued long labels announcing their names, characters, and destination, as well as could be told by needle. Between these sheets of tapestry hung the portraits of armed chiefs and feudal beauties — all the high ancestry of a lordly line*; and the chandelier suspended from the ceiling blazed with lights, and shed its aromatic diffusions over viands and banquetters. Nor was the flavour of the one unworthy the rank of the other; there were the red-legged partridges so famed in Languedoc, the livers of geese fattened by Jews (then eminent in that art), spails stewed in oil of Lucca, conger

* This is no anachronism. The castle of Rochefoucault, in France, was said by Arthur Younge, *before the revolution*, to contain portraits as far back as 1110.

and sturgeon, cranes and swans, Tuscan veal, marchpane and marmalade, and " princely peacock's gilded train," with its brilliant plumage and its bill on fire, for the dainty; and for stomachs more robust, the boar's head and the haunch of the hart of ten duly broken. The richest wines of France and Italy sparkled in the goblets of the knights, which they did not fail to drain; and at every pledge from the carved and gilded galleries of the halls, the minstrels sounded their loud and joyous strains, with the exception of Vidal, who had seated himself among them, and who looked round with an absent and earnest expression, as if awaiting the arrival of some one for whom he was to touch the harp he leant on in silence.

Paladour, as he lingered at the door, and his dazzled eye passing over the group, fell for a moment on Sir Aymer, now no longer a veteran and skilful martialist, but a mere superannuated fop " frount and trickt" from head to foot, sighed to himself unheard, " he bears him like an aged elm, around which the vines of pleasure still cling, flushing lovely and

luxuriant. I am like the oak that spreads its branches in broad and vigorous flourishing, but at whose heart a rottenness hath engendered that causeth the trunk to fall before its time, and to crush even the flower that was smiling by its roots."

The Lord of Courtenaye was now seated at his board-end, between the bishop of Toulouse and the abbot of Normoutier, whom he greeted as became their rank and his: but amid his courtly smiles and silver tones, there was about him an air of circumspective anxiety and jealous frugality and apprehended disdain, that ill became the lord of a feast, at whose board were seated the first prelates and peers of France.

There was another expression, too, which passed from time to time over his features; but of this the Lord of Courtenaye was himself unconscious, from the long indulgence of evil thoughts, corroding recollections, and fearful anticipations; and his guests were too busy with the banquet and too careless of him to remark. For a few moments he sat thus silent

and aghast at the head of his splendid board, often clearing his throat, and at length poured forth, in tremulous but well-modulated tones, a panegyric on the champions of the church who had that day saved the castle of Courtenaye. The speech only drew forth a haughty and indignant laugh from the bishop of Toulouse.

"What, my lord," he said, dipping his hands in a ewer of perfumed water which a kneeling page presented to him, "what! do you deem the crusaders spiders that are summoned to chase a sort of flies from the casements of thy castle—the flight of the heretics was as swift, and their murmur as soon stifled. If such be the peril of thy castle, St. Dominic may garrison thee with his band of inquisitors, and thou mayest defend thy towers with a rosary!"

"Nay," said Sir Aymer, who enjoyed the jest at the expense of the Lord of Courtenaye, "nay, at the next assault, send me summons, and hold me no true knight if thy pages with their silken caps, and thy damsels with their needles, do not beat off the assailants. Marry,

let me have the marshalling of the maidens; they shall be expert, I warrant, in their discipline, and thy foes shall be prostrate before them. Trust me it was pity of my life to see them fall as they did to-day, unarmed and unresisting — alas, to see a host of armed knights trample on a herd of peasant heretics! — it made the very hoofs of my armed steed recoil as I spurred him through the field!”

“The lord abbot,” said the bishop, setting down his cup, “should have been mounted on your steed; he would have seconded the impulse, and have been most apt in the recoil.”

“I retreated to the rear of the host,” said the abbot, “that I might win the fight by prayer. Wot ye not, my lord of Toulouse, that the lifting up of the prophet’s hands won the fight when Israel strove at the siege of Troy — or how d’ye name the place — I know ’tis in Africa —”

“Even so,” said the bishop, “thou didst strive and didst also prevail — for as the rascaille peasantry fled or fell, ever and anon thy hands were devoutly lifted up to a flagon of

muscadine, and deeply didst thou drain it. Marry, there was a transitory neat's tongue, but of that we will not talk — thou didst deal with fervent prayer and hot wines, and we with cold steel and tough carcasses."

The abbot was about to rejoin, when Sir Aymer joyously exclaimed: — "The lord abbot must needs prove his orthodoxy by draining this goblet of Cyprus wine to the speedy destruction of the heretics. What! let him that will not draw his brand against them draw his beaker, at the least; else by my beads (heaven pardon sin I have none), I hold him no true churchman, and the absolution he promised me for the matter he wots of is stark naught."

The abbot filled his cup; the bishop was not slack to follow; Sir Aymer's was sparkling to the brim before theirs were filled; and the Lord of Courtenaye was slowly and gracefully lifting his to his head, when he recollected the usual ceremonial of every pledge being announced by the lay of a minstrel, and made a sign to Vidal, who was leaning in

gloomy absence over the rails of the gallery where he was seated, to touch his harp.

The minstrel complied with a disturbed and reluctant look, and rung out some chords preluding a warlike song that had often been sung at the feasts of his former lord, Raymond of Toulouse: it had been composed on the event of the battle in which, some centuries before, the Saracens, on their invasion of Italy, had been defeated near Padua; and Vidal loved it, for his lord had loved it well — it was a fragment of his former strain.

Fragment.

NIGHT sunk upon the field — by Brenta's side,

Whose troubled currents red with slaughter swell,
Paynim and Christian bands their might have tried.

The arm of God hath smote the infidel,
The shades that loured where many fought and fell
(Shrouding in darkness day's last gleamings red),

Wild image of the battle pictured well

To wanderer lone — or bard with shuddering tread —

If bard might venture well, unscathed, near scene so dread.

2.

For clouds are furling there their volumes deep,

Like folded banners of retiring host.

The parted sun hath sunk in fiery sleep,

Like tented chieftain on his victor-post!

Wild as the cry that murmured 'All is lost !'
The night-winds sweep the field with hollow dirge—
While (as he mourned his bloody purpose crost)
The sanguine streaks that in the darkness merge
Like war-fiend's angry scowl, glare o'er the battle's verge.

3.

Hushed is the battle's roar—the breeze of morn
Waved standard-sheet, and woke the clarion—
Low sung on evening's blast the distant horn
To the cold ear of flight, its warning tone ; —
Fallen is the battle's pride—where gonfalon
O'er peer and paladin in glory streamed ;
Hovering in hungry swoop on dark pennon
The vulture and the bird of carrion screamed,
Where, wan beneath the moon, their mailed corpses gleamed.

As the minstrel struck the last chords, and,
animated by his theme, was arming his hand
for a more martial touch, and tuned to words
more thrilling, the two side doors of the ample
hall unclosed, and from the one appeared the
beautiful vision of the Lady Isabelle, (whom
her uncle willed to grace the feast by her
presence,) attended by her damsels and gou-
vernante, and from the other Sir Paladour,
his armour doffed, and splendidly arrayed for
the banquet ; and as they thus appeared, no
youthful painter, in his dreams inspired by

love and genius, ever imaged two forms more bright and perfect. The form of Paladour had all the sculpture-like glory of a god descended from his pedestal; his eagle eye and cheek of flame seemed at war with the immobility of his figure, as he stood gazing on the loveliness of the form that he beheld. He stood transfixed; but the life-blood that seemed to have deserted his frame gushed in the brightest torrents and wildest tides to his cheek and lip, that, in the language of Southey,

Made the *rose's blush* of beauty pale,
And dimmed the rich geranium's scarlet blaze.

Opposite to him the heiress of Courtenaye and Beaurevoir burst on the eye and soul at once, converting admiration into rapture, and leaving the gazer mute and breathless; moving in the light of beauty, she seemed to communicate a portion of it to the very atmosphere she breathed in. The consciousness of unrivalled loveliness, and the pride of lofty birth, were blended on her brow with a dignity that seemed not to seek for conquests, but to

demand homage ; and the mutable brilliancy of her expression proved feelings within that took instant part with all that wakes the noblest or touches the softest chords of the heart.

In every movement of her form, in every variation of her features, there was an undulation of majesty and gentleness, an union of vivacity and power, a submissive grandeur, a sportive imperiousness that is the peculiar character of female loveliness, claiming protection amid its very omnipotence, but most omnipotent in its weakness. The union of brilliant and lively intelligence with perfect purity is to be found in the human face scarce ever—in those of men never ; it was embodied in that of the Lady Isabelle.

Her apparel was suited alike to her rank and her beauty ; the attire of noble females of that age bearing, from its lengthened drapery and numerous folds, more resemblance to the Grecian than to the Gothic costume. She was arrayed in a tunic and skirt of azure silk ; a zone (not lower than the modern cincture)

compressed her exquisitely modulated bust, and from it hung her embroidered gipsire; her mantle of crimson swept the ground, but one end, gracefully fastened to her zone, displayed the rich embroidery of her left skirt, that blazed with the arms of Courtenaye and Beaurevoir; her wide sleeves, open from the shoulder, disclosed her graceful arms, wreathed with bracelets set with gems; her swan-like neck was encircled with a costly carkanet, and the ringlets of her dark-brown hair, twisted with pearl, were suffered to stream on her bosom, (doubtless through the negligence of her damsels, whom, however, she forgot to chide;) while a gem-studded coronal of gold, over which was flung a glittering veil of auri-frisium, was insufficient to restrain her dark curls from straying over her forehead, and mingling their shade with that of her nobly-arched brows. Some said the Lady Isabelle looked loveliest when she touched her lute in her evening bower; some deemed her so when she presided at the tournament or the banquet; but Vidal, the minstrel, swore she never looked

so lovely as when she distributed the weekly dole at her castle-gate, and with her own delicate hands bestowed their portions on the deformed, the cripple, and the leper, who gazed upon her as they received it, as if at her heavenly smile disease fled, and anguish was forgotten.

As Paladour approached the chair of state where her maidens spread the rich folds of her mantle, while the lady placed her slender foot on an embroidered cushion that a page reverently laid for her, not all Sir Aymer's whispered ridicule and monitory touches could recover him from the delicious trance, the awful tremblings, that at once urged and repelled his timid advance. Sir Aymer, versed in courtly ceremonial as well as in martial discipline, announced with becoming dignity the Knight de la Croix Sanglante; while Paladour blushed and bowed, and the lady, after a graceful bend, dropt her veil of golden thread over half her beautiful face, as if avoiding all further encounter with the fixed and glowing eyes that were raised to hers, but betraying by

the action a feeling and a fear of their power, as flowers close their silken leaves beneath the ardours of a too brilliant sun.

Perhaps the same instinct induced the lady to address herself with smiles and laughter to her maidens, and even to bestow a transient glance on two gorgeously-habited knights who were near her, Sir Ezzelin de Verac and the Sieur de Semonville; the former of whom, with exaggerated affectation, lay on a cushion at her feet, while the other sat upright on his bench, disarranged his costly garb at every movement, called to his page to mend his scarf, cursed him for misdoing it, and then turned to catch the lady's eye, as if his petulant folly and peevish spleen were meritorious service in the eye of high-born beauty. Sir Paladour leant in silence on the arm of her chair, when the lady half turned towards him, and her beautiful lips, slowly unclosing, murmured, "Art thou indeed that knight De la Croix Sanglante, of whom Fame hath said so much?" Paladour, trembling, was about to answer by a profound obeisance, when

Vidal, who from his gallery had watched the moment with anxious eye, pursued his strain unbidden, and painted the reception of the hero of his ballad after his victory.

Fragment.

Oh ! sweet it was to see his smile
Breaking through terror and through toil,
(As summer lightning's vivid glow
Plays o'er the evening's misty brow,)
While graceful thanks in courtly phrase
To prelate, peer, and dame he pays ;
But in his path no rose was shed
Like that his glowing cheek that spread—
Waved on the night no ensign fair
Like his rich rings of floating hair—
Nor gem on beauty's bosom past
The glory that his eye-beam cast,
And mingled, *deep expressions strange*
Glance o'er his cheek with lovely change—
Where the wild glow of boyish grace
Mixed with the warrior's sterner trace—
And high-arched brows' majestic gloom
Shaded a cheek of vernal bloom,
And vermeil lip of dewy thrill
Seemed quivering with the war-word still.

The Lady Isabelle bowed to the minstrel as he sung ; and he, mistaking the signal, paused

in his strain. "I cannot for my soul sing any other songs than those I sung in the halls of Raymond of Toulouse; I sing no song to please the Lord of Courtenaye."

The Lord of Courtenaye meanwhile had been pledging his noble guests deeply, and with graceful courtesy at every pledge, till, at the sudden change of Vidal's minstrelsy, and the force and power of his altered voice at the moment that Paladour was about to address the Lady Isabelle, he bent forward in his chair with ominous conjecture and fearful curiosity. The form and features of Paladour (before concealed by his armour) were then distinctly visible.

"Fill the goblet of our noble host," said the bishop of Toulouse; "he hath forgotten our pledge."

"Yea, to the brim," said the abbot of Normoutier; "for what saith the text—marry, I have forgot—fill mine, knave."

"Hold it to his head, fellow," said Sir Aymer—"he seemeth unable to lift or to empty it."

It was so indeed : the eyes of the Lord of Courtenaye seemed convulsed in their sockets. He held his goblet, and forced a ghastly smile ; but while he did so a blue circle gathered round his lips, which contracted rapidly ; a hideous and squalid paleness overspread his visage ; and while dropping the cup that a page attempted to take from his hands, he exclaimed, " God !—another risen from the dead !—this is sorcery and hellish dealing !" and the Lord of Courtenaye fell senseless beside his chair.

CHAPTER IX.

What shall be the maiden's fate,—

Who shall be the maiden's mate?

Lay of the Last Minstrel.

THE consternation that diffused itself was universal. The Lady Isabelle, with a faint shriek, rose and retired hastily with her female attendants. The guests rose also to depart; those who were unconscious of the cause of the disturbance, full of wonder and inquiry, loud and anxious,—and those who were perhaps conscious profoundly silent, repelling all curiosity with grave looks, and hiding under them feelings that they would willingly have exchanged for those of the most idle and vacant querist. So rapid was the dispersion, that but a few moments had elapsed, when Sir Paladour, starting from the trance-like feeling which

had now become the habit of his life, and which the recent event had powerfully induced, gazed around, and saw himself the sole inmate of the deserted banquet hall. For a moment he seemed to himself to have sat at a feast of visionary beings, and to have been mocked by the semblance of beauties, nobles, knights, and minstrels; but the unfinished viands, the untrimmed lights, the unemptied goblets, were still there, and to his first profound amazement succeeded that deep melancholy with which we view the haunt of departed splendour and festivity. All the emblems and incentives of gaiety and of glory were still there; but the spirit of life that kindled them was extinct, and all were like glowing but dull embers of a dying fire. Unconscious and uncaring where he flung himself, Paladour sat for a few moments opposite the deserted chair of the Lady Isabelle, till, startled by a sigh that almost was breathed in his ear, he turned, and beheld close to him the minstrel Vidal.

• The gentleness of Paladour's spirit struggled

with its habitual depression ; and he said slowly, " That was a sweet fragment of old minstrelsy thou sungst to us, minstrel ; repeat it, I pray thee."

" Lord of these towers," answered Vidal, " seat thee in thy rightful seat, from which the usurper hath fallen beneath the glance of thine eye as if beneath the lightning of heaven, and I will harp to thee as I have to thy father, who loved a minstrel well, while my harp hath a string, or I a finger to touch it."

" Thy words are madness," said Paladour, rising at this wild address.

" So they may be," said Vidal, whose inflamed visage and wandering eyes proclaimed him overcome by wine ; " for I am mad who utter them ; but yet I have words to utter to thee of high import, if the devil that blazes in my brain would deliver them faithfully to the devil that stammers from my tongue. No—I see it is in vain—thou wouldst not believe what thou scarce couldst understand."

“ Wretched man,” said Paladour, “ how couldst thou fall into so low a vice — one that degrades thy lofty art, ennobled as it hath been by hands in whose veins runs the richest blood in France?”

“ Upbraid me not *thou*,” said Vidal, “ for it was grief for thy father and his house”——

“ And who, then, was my father?” said Paladour.

Vidal only answered himself. “ Then habit — the devil — or that strong appetite for feverish life which the minstrel must feel and feed from his first hour to his last. What the murmur of the stream, the song of the birds, the music of the woods when the wind waved them, did for me in my youth — *this* must do for me now ;” and he drained a goblet as he spoke. “ Wo — wo to those,” he said, setting it down, “ who, like me, dip the wings of their muse in wine to brighten her plumes, but lose and drown her in the attempt, and lose themselves after to seek her !”

“ My life seems haunted by portents and

omens," said Paladour; "in the name of Heaven"——

"Hush!" said Vidal, with an aspect of mysterious but mockful solemnity, "name not Heaven beneath this roof; its usurper hath devoted himself to hell, and its inferior agents are now around and watching us. Yet I had something to unfold—something, too, that might redeem my worthless and weary life, and make men say the wandering minstrel parted with a full and fair confession: but not now—my brain still burns and my senses blaze, and I would mix images of my harp's creation—that harp, my comfort and my curse—with substantial things of real horrid life. Darest thou meet me in thy chamber at midnight, youth?"

"Did ever mortal ask such question of me before?" said the knight; "why dare I not?"

"I know not. I am a drunkard—a fool—a madman," he added, draining another goblet. "But look to the furniture of thy sleeping chamber." And drinking again, he sung wildly—

“ And now for the deep and drunken sleep
When the brain is turning, whizzing and burning,
And we plunge into a bed of fire,
Whose roof seems rising higher and higher,
Till the eye-lids drop; yet within them keep
The flame that glares through our frantic sleep,
And we toss through a night of feverish pain,
And wake to thirst and flames again.
Oh ! thus ye slumber, minstrels, well—
Would that such sleep were your only hell !”

“ At midnight, if thou darest,” he added, nodding at the knight.

“ At midnight, if thou *canst* ?” said Paladour. “ Poor soul, I pity thee.”

“ Pity *thyself*,” said Vidal, “ but heed *me* : I will be punctual as the castle bell, solemn as its sound, true as its touch of time, and — forgotten as its echo.” And they parted.

Even when Paladour reached the chamber to which they conducted him, he could not help making a kind of shadowy acquaintance with the objects around him, as if he had beheld them in some early and forgotten part of his existence ; but it was singular, that the more he endeavoured to bring these objects into contact with his faded recollections, they only receded

the faster ; yet, when he gave up the effort, the reminiscences returned with more vividness than ever. Seated by his lamp, which he forgot to trim, he awaited the approach of midnight, while the words of Vidal recurred to his memory ; “survey the furniture of thy sleeping chamber.” A heavy stupor fell on him as he sat, — it was not sleep, for his senses were awake to the slightest impression. The heavy toll of the castle bell, the only announcement of time then known, measured by the hour-glass of the warder of the barbican, and instantly echoed from battlement to terrace, proclaimed midnight. Paladour, starting up, listened and thought he heard the sound of distant steps ; he rose — the steps approached, and a light gleamed along the passage ; a moment afterwards a sound was heard like the fall of a trap-door, mixed with a brief and stifled cry of agony. Paladour never again beheld the minstrel Vidal.

All was hushed in the castle. The perfumed torches with their light were dying away in the arched passages ; not the echo of a step was

heard along them, from the sounding tread of the knights and their attendants to the noiseless step of the sandaled monks ; all that broke on the stillness was the distant baying of the dogs chained in the holes of the outer ballium, or the footfall of the warders, whose armed tread made the stone terraces ring with their marked and accordant sound. The Lord of Courtenaye sat in his closet in silence and with clasped hands. He had recovered from his swoon, but his faculties still seemed darkened and bewildered. Thibaud was his sole attendant, — his ample hand rested on the back of his lord's chair, and his eyes were fixed on the ground : from time to time he raised them to gaze on a black curtain that hung opposite him, and then hastily withdrew them. At length, "How wears the night?" said the Lord of Courtenaye.

"It draws towards midnight," said the attendant ; "towards the appointed hour."

"What sound is that in mine ears, like that of cries of slaughter?" said his lord.

"Perchance the distant baying of the dogs

who are chained in the outer court," answered Thibaud. "I hear no other."

"Nay, but listen."

"I do."

Both were intently silent.

"A footstep approaches," said the Lord of Courtenaye, starting.

"Thou hearest the armed tread of the warders, as they pace the rocky terraces, which return every step with a marked and distinct echo," replied the vassal.

"Methought," said the Lord of Courtenaye, "the sound was close at my chamber door."

"In the deep and stilly night," said Thibaud, "sounds come with a strong distinctness to the ear, that in the hurry of day we would not heed, or could not hear."

"It fares, then," said his lord, "with the mind as with the ear; for, in the night, many thoughts arise that seem to shun us by day. Oh that the eye of the mind could be closed, even as the ear of the body may be shut, against such visitors, by sleep, — yea, though the sleep were eternal!" He paused, and

rocking himself in his chair, murmured, "Now that all sound hath ceased, doth not the stillness press on thine ear as somewhat dreary and unnatural?"

"Dreary enough," said Thibaud, with a faint shudder, "but not unnatural. The castle is hushed, and all the guests are departed."

"Would that they were," said the Lord of Courtenaye; "but I have a guest who will not depart: he is with me when I am alone:—were an hundred voices around me, his is the only one I hear: he was at my board to-night,—he is in my closet now." And, as he spoke, the Lord of Courtenaye, with trembling hand and reverted eye, withdrew the black curtain and disclosed the portrait of an armed warrior. Thibaud shrunk from the view, or from the resemblance it bore to one he beheld so lately; but his lord fiercely shook his feeble hand at the portrait as he dropt the curtain, and cried,— "The sword cannot slay — banishment cannot expel — excommunication cannot crush and wither the accursed race, —

one serpent maimed sends forth another to hiss in my face. There is but another course to be taken," he added, his eyes fixed on a point with fearful expression.

"And that course, lord, thou must tread alone," said Thibaud, retiring.

"Begone, then, fool," said his lord in wrath; "thou art not fit to hear of such high mysteries, far less to speak of them. One sound of thy profane utterance were enough to undo all that the words of the sage, and the works wrought in this chamber of secrecy, are doing for me now—even this moment. I pray thee rid me of thy presence!"

"That is lightly done," said Thibaud, opening the door,— "as lightly," he muttered behind it, "as at thy hest I left thee brotherless." Then half opening it and showing his inflamed yet ghastly face,— "for the encounter thou art about to brave, trust me, one holy priest were worth an host of armed knights. For the body I reckon not, come fiend come foe,—but for the soul—— I have had fearful dreams of late;— what will be thine, dark-dealing lord,

to-night? — even amid the horrors of mine own I will smile, in vision, to think how deeper thine must be.”

As the door by which Thibaud retired closed, another opened, (for every pannel in the closet contained a secret door,) and a figure appeared at it that seemed, indeed, “not of this world.” His visage was deeply marked with the traces of time and thought, his eyes sunk, his forehead wrinkled, and his beard descended to his girdle; on his bald head was a conical cap, marked with strange figures, and on his breast the mystical angles of the pentacle: he had a staff in one hand, and a parchment with the plan of a horoscope in the other. His white garment had a border wrought with the signs of the zodiac, and his girdle was wrought with Arabic characters, in the centre of which blazed in gold the tetragrammaton—the awful four letters, whose influence, alike awing the devout and intimidating the weak, gave at once sanctity and terror to his appearance.

Thus arrayed, pale, trembling, and hoary, the sage stood before the Lord of Courtenaye;

and each gazed on the other as those who have to hear or to communicate fearful intelligence, yet dread to ask or to utter it.

“Speak!” said the lord at last, in a choked voice, “for I feel thou hast evil to tell, — herald and agent, perchance, of evil as thou art.”

“The constellations withhold their light to-night,” said the trembling astrologer; “but one burns dimly in the heavens, and he is to thee most hostile; — a stranger is in the house of Mars, whose mail is redder than blood; and the planet that is the lord of thine ascendant is dim.”

“Liar and villain!” said the spleenful lord, rushing on the defenceless old man. “Villain, — but not liar,” he added, shuddering as he recoiled, “a stranger indeed hath come,” — and he sunk on his seat.

“Then are my words verified,” said the trembling seer. “Alas! I can read the stars, but cannot command them.”

“Slave and dog!” cried the patron, gnashing his teeth; “was it for this I snatched thy

withered carcass from the flames of the inquisition? — marry, I did the flames little wrong, — thine whole anatomy would not have yielded one drop of blood, to hiss in the fire. Was it for this I saved thee from the vassalage, when old wives with distaffs, and boys with bird-bolts, would have threshed thee to chaff? Was it for this? — to taunt me with thy terms of art, the jargonry of thy vile trade, and teach me a lesson from the stars thou never readeest thyself; or, if thine art be aught but a lie, mightest efface, and seek or trace happier characters and more auspicious presages.”

“ Lord of Courtenaye,” said the seer, more incensed at the indignity offered to his art than to his person, “ what talkest thou of effacing the letters of thy destiny written in that book of heaven, the stars, which all eyes may gaze on, — but gifted eyes alone may read? Canst *thou* turn back their courses or veil their light? Thou mayest place thine hand over thy feeble organs, and hide their lustre from thee; but will that retard their

viewless operation, or empower him who reads them to say, because they are not bright to thee, they are not legible to him. Thus was the prophet rebuked by the incredulous Moabitish chief; and thus also he answered, — if Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go aside from” — — — — —
— “Knave, slave, and in one word — astrologer,” said the angry lord, stamping in agony of impotent wrath, “wretch and dog, is it for this I have periled life and soul to shelter thee in the turrets of my castle?”

“Light thanks I owe thee for it,” said the incensed sage, “for thou didst it for the sake of that which thou valuest more than soul or body, the towers of that castle which to-night trembles over thine head.”

“Thou monster of ignorance,” said the lord, not hearing him in his passion, “scarce worthy to rehearse a traditionary almanack, to tell the peasants’ wives that by our Lady’s grace it will thunder in summer, and if the foul fiend (would he had thee) prevent not, in winter there will be snow: — thou human

horologe — thou — but words are wasted on thee thou ducking obsequious slave of time, and boasted ruler of futurity, that canst set all the stars in an uproar when the handle of my lady's fan is lost, and put constellations to torture if her lap-dog be astray; — is it thou who pratest when the destiny of the Lord of Courtenaye is weighing in the balances of heaven, or of hell? — Avaunt, I say, begone, teach thy stars to speak better language, or by the protomartyr, I will exalt thee fifty feet nearer them on a gibbet in the castle-court, where, nailed to it, thou shalt have leisure to view them, unless the hooded crow first peck thy bleared and doating eyes out."

The astrologer stood aghast, and the Lord of Courtenaye was rapidly approaching one of those paroxysms of fury that so often proved fatal alike to associate or foe, when a sound was heard from beneath his feet that operated instantaneously on his fiercest moods; and the fear of the one, and the passion of the other, were hushed in a moment to watch it. The sound was repeated, and soon after a board in

the floor beneath them (which was for certain purposes but partially paved) rose with a slow motion, and disclosed the form of a female, who emerged from it. She was wrapt in a grey mantle, the hood of which fell far over her face : her shape was completely enveloped in this mantle, but when her feet touched the floor, she extended one bare and sinewy arm towards the Lord of Courtenaye, and exclaimed, " Spirit dark and disquieted, be at rest — for I am here."

" And welcome art thou, my meet ally," said the wretched man, now almost raving between the extremes of rage and terror ; " the assassin and the astrologer, the powers that I could hope aid from in earth or sky, have deserted me : there remains but thee, — whence *thou* comest I guess, where thou wilt bear me I reckon not, — the strong necessity of fate drives me to thee, and to thee I will cling as my last, deadly, inevitable, and *most accursed* resource."

" Thou hast spoken my welcome well," answered the figure, without changing position, place, or feature, — " none ever cursed

the evil power in bitterness of voice and spirit more deeply than when they felt their sole dependence was on him."

"Speak to her," said the Lord of Courtenaye, "for though her presence exalts, her voice chills me;"—and he sunk on his chair incensed, and yet vacillating between them, not knowing in the agony of his incertitude on which he should bestow the name of demon and deluder, or to which he should offer himself a victim.

"Lord of Courtenaye," exclaimed the astrologer, "the astral spirits, whose being is purity, and whose essence is light, may ill consort with those whose forms are exhalations from the burning lake, whose breath is blasting, and whose blessings are curses. If man *will* rend asunder the veil that wraps futurity, if he will know that which Heaven will not have known, let him seek it at least where the temptation may be a balance against the offence, as the fruit of Eden might be a palliation for the fall;—let him read the vast volume of the planetary skies, alive with glory and instinct with know-

ledge :—not the blood-scrawled leaves of dead-men's skin where sorcery traces the dooms of hell. Even if our system err, is it not better to err with us?—to dream that we see the astral intelligences seated each on his golden orb, guiding their mystic dance round the throne of light, and hymning to each other the songs of paradise through the stillness of unmeasured space, till mortal cares and thoughts are lost amid the dim glories of nocturnal contemplation—the inaudible but heart-echoed harmonies of heaven — and the rush of the expanded soul that pursues its bright and boundless career through the infinitudes of the universe, seeking and tracing the mysterious and irreversible relation which every minute and opaque orb holds to the destination of the inhabitants of its neighbour-planet;—is not this a laudable temerity?—a god-like sin?—an aspiration worthy of an angel not quite fallen?”

He paused; but of his hearers, one seemed as if he heard him not, and the other as if she were listening to other voices. “The glories,

and perchance the truths of heaven, were unfolded to thee," said the indignant sage, departing, "and thou hast rejected them,—the horrors and the darkness of hell be thine, since thou hast chosen them;" and he disappeared through the narrow door which led by a secret stair to the loftiest turret in the castle.

"The dotard is gone," said the Lord of Courtenaye; "speak now, if thine art be not a fable, or thy power a dream; canst thou by drug or charm, or aught of evil operation thou boastest of, do deadly and sudden work on mine enemy?—he is within these walls—within my very clutch—do *thou* some mortal deed on him this night."

"What fearest thou from him?" said the fearless female.

"That which I cannot utter," answered her shuddering companion. "Were an assassin holding a dagger to my throat,—were a fiend grasping my disembodied spirit, I should know what I had to fear, and knowing would cease to fear: but this suspense between earth and

hell, this dream-like existence among beings of this world, and beings that are not of it, fills me with fears I cannot utter ;—indefinite fears worse than darkest realities.”

“ Then art thou twice the coward I deemed thee,” said the female ; “ there is a peril from which the bravest may shrink, even in his hour of might : but he who dreads to name his danger, dreads the sound of his own voice, — becomes a spectre to himself, and never was fear so horrible. Men have said, fear is the shadow of danger ; but I say unto thee, danger is but the shadow of fears like thine ;—but thou art a dissembler in thy very cowardice ;—there is something lurking in the folds of thy heart which thou darest not reveal to thyself, though I already know it.”

“ A stranger came to my castle to-night,” said the Lord of Courtenaye, covering his eyes with his hands ;—“ and he bears such resemblance to my mortal enemy—”

“ As son to sire,” answered the female, — “ I know it, — and such he is.”

“ Hell take thee, sorceress,” exclaimed the

angry lord, grinding the curse between his teeth.

“Waste not thy breath on useless prayer,” said the female, with a dreadful smile;—
“Hell is at work to find room for us both.”

“Accursed be thy destiny!” said the furious lord, “and doubly accursed the instruments with which it hath enforced me to deal!”

“Accursed rather,” retorted the female, “be thy evil passions; and tenfold accursed the need that compels the power that moves thee to assume the form of thine instrument!”

“Instrument or power,” exclaimed the lord, “name thyself, or *be* what thou wilt, —mine enemy is within my walls, rid me of him, and —— Oh that I knew what demon wafted him hither, that I might curse him!”

“Curse *me*, then,” said the female; “this hand pointed, this arm rowed, this eye fixed his path to thy towers.”

“I am bewildered,” said the unhappy man; “there is a mystery about thee that nought can penetrate;—thou hast promised me the destruction of mine enemy, — thou bringest him

beneath my roof, — thou triumphest in my ruin, — thou hast boasted thou wilt work *his* — What must I think, — is this thy faith to me?"

"Oh!" cried the female, exalting her lofty figure with her voice — "my faith to thee shall be truly kept. I am bound to thee by ties thou knowest not, or hast, perchance, forgotten, — by me remembered ever. I swore that by my means should be wrought the destruction of thine enemy; — that oath I pledged to thee in thy vault of sorcery — again I pledge it to thee in this chamber — the portal of hell; and that I may redeem it, know that Vidal, the minstrel, is even now seeking the chamber of the stranger, and will reveal to him that which may give the 'fiery arrow' a fleeter wing and surer mark."

"Vidal here!" exclaimed the Lord of Courtenaye, — "and seeking the chamber of that stranger knight, but whence and wherefore is it," he cried, pausing, "that thou thus ever seemest to deal doubtfully betwixt me and mine enemies, — to evade, and yet fulfil my purpose?"

“For mine *own*,” answered the female, sternly; “but if the deed thou wishest be wrought, ask not thou the means or instrument;—they may be beyond thy thought to reach, or thy touch to finger, save to harm them ——”

“Ho! Thibaud!” cried the Lord of Courtenaye.

“Ay, summon him,” repeated the female. “Now is Thibaud in his office. Alas! that vengeance should rest in men’s hands, and *only* in women’s hearts!”

Thibaud appeared at the door, and seemed to listen with eagerness to the whispered communications of his lord.

“Assassin—lord and murdering ruffian! ye are met again,” said the female to herself; “but soon shall ye be parted, each to his destiny. Amid fires your bond of slaughter was begun; amid fires it shall be consummated ——”

At this moment the whispers of the lord and his attendant reached her, as she stood erect and motionless, her arms folded, appear-

ing to listen only to her own dark mutterings ; yet, from habit, involuntarily catching the slightest sound within the compass of hearing. Some of those sounds were terrific enough ; but her ear was now cold as her heart was seared ; and she listened, if not with pleasure, with a kind of fearful interest, as one who herself had interest in all fearful things. The whispers became louder, and Thibaud seemed urging some desperate measure.

“ No noise — no tumult ! ” murmured the lord ; “ the castle is full of guests lightly aroused. ” The whispers sunk lower ; then came the scarce audible sound, — “ The passage that he must tread to that chamber — the trap-door he wots not of, but thou canst govern its springs — thou knowest how they play — he falls through it. My countdom to the coin thou balancest in thine hand, — I will treble it — quadruple it — so thou doest thy work well ; — the drunken dreamer will fall into the snare, and awake in eternity. ”

Their slow and faltering steps were then

heard for a few moments, as they glided along the passage ; the female listened till the sound had ceased, and then raising the trap-door, plunged into the vaults to pursue her unutterable occupation.

* * * * *

Far other scenes than those that occurred in the secret chambers of the Lord of Courtefaye, and the restless apartment of Paladour, were passing in the chamber of the Lady Isabelle ;—scenes of loveliness and light, of reposing beauty, and perfumes that gently prepared the senses for slumber ; and music, that wound up the spell by its richest and softest tones ; and all that high-born beauty might claim, or feudal power command ;—all, were displayed in the night-chamber of the Lady Isabelle.

The lady, her dark-brown locks (now untwined from the band of gems, coronal, and veil,) touching the ground, sat in a lofty chair ; while her female attendants, of the lower class, were arranging her beautiful

tresses for the night, Germonda and Blanche, her favourite attendants, lay on cushions at their lady's feet, — sometimes chiding the inferior attendants for their negligence in arranging her long-flowing locks, — sometimes pausing, in their chidings, to admire their beauty and length, and lifting in their slender hands the lady's hair, that now, fully displayed, fell from her tapestried chair to the floor. Dame Marguerite kept her post of honour at the back of the lady's chair, fan in hand, mirror at her girdle, her eye glancing at the inferior attendants, as if to intimate that the art of placing combs, or of braiding tresses, was lost since her time; and ever and anon scowling at the young favourites who occupied the embroidered cushions at their lady's feet. Meanwhile, Dame Marguerite panted with terror, lest a secret of her own should be discovered, which, if known, would, in those towers of feudal power and violence, have cost her life on its discovery.

Undisturbed by the secret jealousies of her attendants, and the desperate treachery of the

gouvernante, the Lady Isabelle, in all the light-hearted sportiveness of undoubting security, and the gay consciousness of triumphant beauty preparing for gorgeous repose, was jesting with her attendant damsels: "Now read me my riddle, maidens," she said, "and read it right, — Which of all my suitors deserves to be rated highest in our esteem, or in your commendation?"

The damsels, as the lady guessed, each commended him whom she was least anxious to acknowledge as her favourite. "Ah, lady!" said the elder, "who can doubt the supremacy of that knight for the very lists of love, Sir Ezzelin, that sovereign of cuts, slashes, and guards, and indeed that most potent prince of the territory of fringes and feathers? — Cupid's arrows are ambushed in every fold of his doublet, Venus's swans are in the plumes of his cap. Trust me, no knight dare tilt with him, unless a tailor were his squire; then there might be fearful odds. For me, so help me needle and bodkin, I dare no more undertake him on the ground of women's gear from the

tapestry that covers your chair to the lace that binds your skirt, than I dare do battle with the heretics, or encounter the Lord of Courtenaye when the crane or peacock is not duly dismembered, or the wines of Greece and Italy offered to the guests below the salt."

"Where didst thou learn the nonsense thou hast talked?" said the lady.

"Be not displeased, lady," said the attendant, trembling; "it was from a wandering minstrel, an attendant of Sir Ezzelin de Verac. The words were dictated, he told me, by a maid who loved him."

"The words are naught, and the music discord to mine ear," said the lady. "What canst *thou* say?"—to her other attendant.

"Nought but what the Lady Isabelle would hear," replied the cautious damsel; and the lady answered, "Say on without offence."

"Then, for my life," said the damsel, "methinks the Sieur de Semonville hath a pleasant wit; his patrimony is ample, his birth noble, his haviour gentle."

“Check thy falcon, lest it prove a haggard,” said the lady, smiling; “I will myself tell the rest; his hawks well bathed—his hounds well fed—his towers well warded—his treasures well barred in the ample chests of his castle hall.—But, mercy of Heaven! what hand rends mine hair so?”

Dame Marguerite, weary of her long silence and perhaps anxious to conceal her treachery by increased officiousness, advanced, fanning herself with much trepidation; and avouched that she had snatched the lady's tresses out of the hands of the conspiring minions, who, beside their want of skill in bredes and bands, globes and spires, had dared to breathe the name of a landless knight, whose birth and lineage were unknown, as paregal with the names of the noble suitors of the lady, Sir Ezzelin de Verac and the Sieur de Semonville.

“And who was that knight of whom they dared to speak?” said the Lady Isabelle, in a tone that made each party fear she had gone too far.

“Sir Paladour,” quoth Marguerite at length — “that doubtful and dangerous guest of the castle of Courtenaye. Twice did I courtesy to him unnoticed, though I stood close beside thy chair—three times (by chance) I dropt my fan; he never regarded it—then I coughed aloud; and, instead of tending me the broidered kerchief or napkin, he bowed to look for thine. Now out on him for an hilding, a most uncourteous and unnurtured knight!—I say fie on him——”

“Dame Marguerite,” said the Lady Isabelle, pointing to the tapestry of her chamber, which was embroidered in allegorical figures representing the seven deadly sins, with their concomitants, “thou seest the punishment of *Mal-bouche* and *Vil-reproche*—I trust thou wilt not incur it.” Dame Marguerite was dumb as the figures in the tapestry. “Claudine,” said the lady in a tone of languid pleasure to the discarded attendant, “bind thou my hair; thy touch is softer, methinks, and thy hand most skilful.—Now for a tale

of the last tourney we witnessed, damsels. Where was the last pageant shown? I love to have those bright images haunt me between sleep and waking, to have them linger betwixt mine eyelids ere I sleep, and wake me with their bright forms before the dawn."

The damsels were instantly profuse in their praises of some splendid pageants exhibited in honour of the Lady of Courtenaye.

"Methought," said the skilful Claudine, "I saw in my dreams a pageant that outdid them both. I saw a fair fortalice assailed by a knight who called himself L'Amour, and he flung feathers, fringes, and flounces at it, and the lady who held out the fortalice laughed him to scorn: then came another knight, naming himself La Richesse, and he flung purse after purse, and then he began to fling heavy chests at it, and still the fortalice and the lady held out bravely. Now, at the end of the pageant, came in a knight named *Le Bel Estranger*, and he neither summoned nor assaulted the fortress; he bowed, and looked,

and the lady and the fortress were in his hands in a moment."

The Lady Isabelle was silent; but the attendant damsels navigated instantly and skilfully on the new tack indicated by Claudine.

"Methinks," said Blanche, "I too have seen that pageant played, but not in a dream; and oh, how lovely looked *Le Bel Estranger*! Is he not the absolute prince of fancy, the sovereign of the domains of valour and of beauty? How looks the *Sieur de Semonville's* visage to his?—like that of a mousing owl to a soaring falcon's."

"And Sir Ezzelin's gorgeous attire," quoth the other, "seemed in comparison like the mottled plumage of the pye with the dark pinion of the king of birds, the strong rider of the elements."

"I am weary," said the lady;—"disarray me for rest. But thou, Claudine, be near when I sleep; I love thee well, wench, though I have not shown it hitherto. Wear this carkanet for my sake; but wear it not; I charge thee, in presence of Sir Paladour.—"

Now read me my riddle once more, my maidens." As her head sunk on the silken pillow—"How may ladies sink most sweetly into their first slumber?"

"I ever sleep best," said Blanche, "when some withered crone is seated by the hearth fire to tell me tales of wizardry or goblins, till they are mingled with my dreams, and I start up, tell my beads, and pray her to go on, till I see that I am talking only to the dying embers, or the fantastic forms shaped by their flashes on the dark tapestry or darker ceiling."

"And I love," said Germonda, "to be lulled to rest by tales of knights met in forests by fairy damsels, and conducted to enchanted halls, where they are assailed by foul fiends, and do battle with strong giants; and are, in fine, rewarded with the hand of the fair dame, for whom they have perilled all that knight or Christian may hold precious for the safety of body and of soul."

"Peace and good rest to you all, my dame and maidens!" said the lady in whispering

tones from her silken couch. "None of you have read my riddle. She sleeps sweetest and deepest who sleeps to dream of her first love—her first—her last—her only. A fair good night to all. Stay thou with me, Claudine, and touch thy lute, wench, to the strain of some old ditty—old and melancholy—such as may so softly usher sleep, that I feel not his downy fingers closing mine eyelids, or the stilly rush of his pinions as they sweep my brow."

Claudine prepared to obey, as the lady sunk to rest amid softened lights, subdued odours, and dying melodies. A silver lamp, richly fretted, suspended from the raftered roof, gleamed faintly on the splendid bed. The curtains were of silk, and the coverlet of velvet, faced with miniver; gilded coronals and tufts of plumage shed alternate gleam and shadow over every angle of the canopy; and tapestry of silk and silver covered every compartment of the walls, save where the uncouthly constructed doors and windows broke them into angles, irreconcilable alike to every

rule of symmetry or purpose of accommodation. Near the ample hearth, stored with blazing wood, were placed a sculptured desk, furnished with a missal and breviary gorgeously illuminated, and a black marble tripod, supporting a vase of holy water; certain amulets, too, lay on the hearth, placed there by the care of Dame Marguerite, some in the shape of relics, and others in less consecrated forms, on which the lady was often observed by her attendants to look somewhat disregardfully. The great door of the chamber was closed by the departing damsels carefully; and the rich sheet of tapestry dropt over it, whose hushful sweeping on the floor seemed like the wish for a deep repose breathed from a thing inanimate. The castle was still, the silver lamp twinkled silently and dimly; the perfumes, burning in small silver vases round the chamber, began to abate their gleams and odours; the scented waters, scattered on the rushes with which the floor was strewn, flagged and failed in their delicious tribute to the sense; the bright moon, pouring

its glories through the uncurtained but richly-tinted casement, shed its borrowed hues of crimson, amber, and purple on curtain and canopy, as in defiance of the artificial light that gleamed so feebly within the chamber.

Claudine tuned her lute, and murmured the rude song of a troubadour, such as follows.

Song.

SLEEP, noble lady!—They sleep well who sleep in warded castles. If the Count de Monfort, the champion of the church, and the strongest lance in the chivalry of France, were your foe, as he is your friend, one hundred of the arrows of his boldest archers at their best flight would fail to reach a loophole of your towers.

Sleep, noble lady!—They sleep well who are guarded by the valiant. Five hundred belted knights feast in your halls; they would not see your towers won, though to defend them they took the place of your vassals, who are tenfold that number—and, lady, I wish they were more for your sake. Valiant knights, faithful vassals, watch well your lady's slumbers; see that they be never broken but by the matin bell, or the sighs of lovers whispered between its tolls.

Sleep, noble lady!—Your castle is strong, and the brave and the loyal are your guard.

Then the noble lady whispered to me through her silken

curtain : ‘ A foe hath found his way to me, though my towers are strong, and the valiant are my guard, and the brave and the beautiful woo me in song, and with many kissings of their hands.’ And I asked, what foe is that ?—The lady dropt her silken curtain, and slept ; but methought in her dreams she murmured—‘ That Foe is Love !’

CHAPTER X.

New oaths I can exactly swear,
No woman under heaven I fear,
And forty healths my brains will bear
Most stoutly.

SUCKLING.

THE next day after the arrival of the crusaders, when a brief mass had been said in the chapel, a kind of war-council was held in the great hall of the castle of Courtenaye. The Lord of Courtenaye himself (*dextra frigida bello*) presided at it, to accustom himself to the dreaded sight of Paladour. The deliberation was deep and anxious; it was obvious that the Albigeois, crushed and scattered as they were, were still formidable, as a band of them had so lately, though unsuccessfully, attempted to make their way to Arragon. They might be aided by similar parties from the mountain

fastnesses; and those who were dispersed through the cities of Languedoc might rise in support of their brethren; and thus the defeat of a feeble and unarmed outpost might operate as a signal to raise the inhabitants of the most populous and cultivated territory in France.

The abbot of Normoutier and the majority were therefore for crushing all who resisted at a single blow, without mercy, hesitation, or delay; and they urged their present state of terror and weakness as the most opportune for striking such a blow, when a slight skirmish on the preceding day had made their bravest bite the dust. Others urged the expediency of tarrying till King Philip had disembroiled his affairs with King John of England — till the result of the Count of Toulouse's negotiation with the Pope were known — or, finally, till the arrival of Count Simon de Monfort, who, with his forces, was expected every hour; and this (as they represented) less from their need of his aid, than from their fear of offending that powerful lord, the

favourite of the Pope, the rival of his sovereign, and the chosen champion of the armies of the church.

During the debate, while the Lord of Courtenay sat pale and balancing between the fears of having his castle deserted and the charges attendant on the protracted sojourn of the crusaders and their followers, a horn was sounded at the gate, and letters from Rome were delivered by a kneeling messenger to the bishop of Toulouse, who retired to a distant window to read them.

From the moment of their perusal, the bishop sat silent and abstracted during the debate, shaking his head when appealed to, and tracing with the end of his crosier shapeless figures amid the rushes on the floor.

At length, roused by the repeated cries of "My lord, we lack your counsel" — "My lord of Toulouse was not wont to spare in giving sharp counsel against the heretics" — "My lord of Toulouse was wont to deal with the brand, not the crosier" — "Yea," quoth the abbot of Normoutier, "for what was my

censure—let us crush them at a blow—*non vi, sed sæpe cædendo*.” Thus urged, the bishop of Toulouse, with evident reluctance, spoke of the expediency of a brief delay. Mortified pride and disappointed passions struggled through his extorted confession, and were obviously the causes of its having been so long withheld. Yet not even under circumstances the most unfavourable did his deportment lack dignity, or his arguments plausibility.

He said, that till the pleasure of the Pope was known through the legate, now on his way to France, it were perilous to proceed further in the matter; and he added, as matter of confidence, that the legate’s counsels were perchance too much under the influence of an obscure ascetic, an eremite whom men called the monk of Montcalm, who held preaching to be a better means of converting the heretics, according to the mode of the blessed St. Dominic, (founder of the order of Dominican preachers,) than the lances and swords of crusaders. “Yet let us yield,” concluded the bishop, “to the will of the

holy father ; thus by a timeous delay we shall win his approbation, and avoid all shadow of offence to the champion of the church, the valiant Simon de Monfort, who might grudge to see the harvest reaped to his hand, before he had put in his own sickle. And we will also relieve our noble host from the fear of having his towers besieged by the heretics ; for, ere three days elapse, the warder's horn shall blow a blast from his highest battlement, as he descries the advancing army of Simon de Monfort ; and that blast will be echoed by the trumpets of the champion of the church, with all his famed and fair array glittering on the mountains that tower and frown through yonder casement."

Loud and deep murmurs were heard in the hall at the bishop's words, though all, from their knowledge of his warlike, ambitious, and impetuous character, felt they were extorted. Some exclaimed they were betrayed ; some that they were deceived and dishonoured ; and the rest, indignant alike and weary of the perpetual vacillations and compromising

spirit of the papal councils, swore they never would clasp gorget or draw brand again while a sort of halting priests, whose missives might be months in reaching them, were to determine on the chance of blows that must be struck within the hour, and their echo never heard in the Vatican.

The tumult of voices and of passions rose and raged louder and fiercer every moment, while the Lord of Courtenaye trembled, and the ecclesiastics attempted to mediate in vain. "Hot lords," exclaimed the one party, "be more restrained; is it thus ye show your reverence for holy church, whose champions ye vaunt to be, by defying the authority of its holy head in the teeth of his own missives?"

"Craven knights, recreant crusaders," retorted the others, "we best show our regard for the interests of the church when we defend them at peril of our lives, even though its head seems to have forgotten them."

The abbot of Normoutier, meanwhile, whose voice had little weight in the assembly, but who appeared in full costume of crosier, ring,

and mitre, raised his weary eyes often to the windows ; and, as he saw the shadows fall far eastward, wondered how men could waste time in wild debate while the meats were cooling ; and felt disposed to answer those who occasionally sought his opinion (more from deference to his rank than his judgment) somewhat in the style of the honest priest in the ‘ Fop’s Fortune,’ — “ In truth, unless some one be married presently, dinner will be cold, and then—nobody will be able to eat it : ” —while the bishop of Toulouse, who had his own reasons for keeping on terms with the court of Rome, and yet felt deeply the personal indignity of being held dependent on the counsels of the legate, governed, as he admitted they were, by an ascetic monk whom he affected to despise, sat indignant and sullen, enjoying the storm that gathered and growled around him, and deeming the hour was not far distant when he might grasp its collected thunders in his hand, and, while they rocked the towers of the Vatican, make

the roar rebellow through every court in Europe.

The debate had now reached a pitch of wrath and fury, when the sound of horns was once more heard at the gates of the castle ; and the crusaders, like steeds reined up and foaming for battle, (who, at the sound of the trumpet, stand for a moment with ears erect and eyes on flame, arching their noble necks and champing their bits,) paused, fretted and impatient for the tidings.

They had long to wait for them, and fiercely their impatience brooked the delay ; while a wearied horseman rode slowly into the castle-yard, and, seeking the hall with the heavy step of one toil-worn and foredone, his steel sandals making heavy measure to his tread along the paved passages, after he was refreshed with a deep draught, told for truth the certain tidings of the arrival of Count Raymond of Toulouse in France : but whether he was content to sit down with the spoliation of his domains and the dispersion of his vassalage,

or to rise in aid and rescue of both, the narrator knew not.

The effect of this intelligence on the assembly, divided as they were, was single and simultaneous. All, in spite of his vacillating character and compromising spirit, dreaded the power and presence, the exhaustless resources, and undiminished popularity of Raymond of Toulouse;—reconciled to, or at feud with, the Pope, they felt his presence was equally formidable to them; and at the tidings the loudest became silent, and the boldest were awed. Some apprehensions too, according to the superstitions of the age, were mingled with their dread of the recent intelligence,—for all believed Raymond of Toulouse held communication with infernal powers, and forbidden arts as a heretic; and those who had most fiercely urged the necessity of immediately exterminating the heretics, began to wish for further delay in the matter, till the legate's pleasure were known; and even accused themselves of bringing, by their irre-

verent language used against the Pope, a judgment on the land in the return of Count Raymond, — an impression which, it must be acknowledged, the ecclesiastics took no particular pains to efface.

Meanwhile, Sir Paladour mused on his meeting with the stranger on the heath, and deemed it was not impossible that Count Raymond and he had met before, though under circumstances so strange and shadowy that they now crossed his memory like a dream: while the Lord of Courtenaye, weary of a debate where he had no share, and of a scene where he sustained no part of dignity, seized the first moment of tranquillity to command the doors of the banqueting hall to be thrown open: the seneschal, with his silver wand, advanced; the pages and sewers stood in prompt attendance; and Paladour, forgetting the past, and compromising for the dreaded future, felt his whole frame thrill with delicious tremblings, as the order was obeyed. The lights, the luxuries, and the splendour of

the banquet, — splendid as that age of feudal power could invent or furnish, made strong contrast to the gloomy hall — the fierce and protracted debate — the interchanged pledges of mortal defiance — and, finally, the tidings that spread doubt and consternation among them all.

It was a proud and yet softening sight, to see how the most fierce and evil passions that can disturb the frame and agitate the mind of man, even when those frames are as adamant, and those minds fit tenants for such mansions, bowed and humbled themselves in the presence of female beauty. As the knights crowded into the banquet hall, “the might, the majesty of loveliness,” displayed in the form, the array, and the lofty courtesy of the Lady Isabelle, hushed every ruder sound, and dispelled every fiercer feeling. Men forgot they were foes while they looked at her; and those who had not felt enmity, wondered it could ever be felt on earth while such a being trod its surface.

The command of her uncle had summoned her again to the banquet; but, from the splen-

dour of her habit, her damsels guessed that the command was not reluctantly obeyed : and as the crusaders filled the hall, she bowed with such lofty submission — she greeted with such gentle stateliness — her lovely swan-like neck was curved with such majestic yet winning undulation — her sunny eyes flashed such brilliant yet chastened light on all who bowed within the sphere of their radiance — that the elder knights, like Priam's counsellors on another occasion, swore, that a ten years' crusade were better waged in the cause of such beauty, than against the rascaille Albigeois for a day ;—while the younger testified their devotion by swearing certain fantastical vows, which the lady annulled as soon as they were uttered, and smiled in gay disdain on those who imagined she could ever be plaintiff or defendant in the court of *les arrets d'amour*.

The knights then flung themselves on the rushes and tapestry at the lady's feet, and sought her attention by modes of courtship, so long exploded, that the tale would be tedious to modern ears. In that vast assembly there

were but two individuals who beheld the proud sight of power, rank, and valour, prostrate at the feet of beauty, with indifference or with reluctance. The Lord of Courtenaye, who murmured to himself, — “While that witch can spell within her circle of beauty all that is noble and valiant in France, these towers may defy the fiery arrow; but——” in involuntary agony he clenched his hands, then instantly, with strong effort unclasping them, extended them with a graceful action of hospitality towards his guests, as he seated himself at the board end.—And the abbot of Normoutier, who, puffing in the rear, and telling his beads, repeated incessantly, — “Oh for the quiet of mine abbey, where vigils, matins, vespers, nocturns, and lauds, were not more duly observed than the hours of refection and rest, or indeed so well attended! Our Lady speed me in safety from these warlike counsels, or rather counsel-like wars, where men have no appetite but for cold steel, which would clean spoil both appetite and digestion with me. Good fellow, I pray thee, break up that

pasty ! — nay, stand not on bowing and tarrying for sewer or carver ; I am an humble churchman, and bound to take with gratitude the bounty of the founder. Ha ! before God, an excellent and well-devised condiment — somewhat overdone though. Holy St. Bruno ! ” — he exclaimed, after having dealt with the pasty, wiping his beard with a napkin, and looking round on the younger knights — “ Holy St. Bruno ! what fools men be ! after a day of fasting that would have tried the stomach of a friar of Camaldoli,* and an uproar that would have silenced a conclave of Cardinals or a synod of Dominican preachers, even with the wind in their favour, — with good cheer before them, these youths turn from it to be eye-fed on a woman’s favour. — A cup of wine, I pray thee ! — stint not till I bid thee ; my tongue cleaves to my palate with ruling the stormy counsels of this day ; — fill it again, I tell thee ! — uttering much wisdom hath made me thirsty, and commanding those enchain’d spirits

* The severest in point of diet of all the orders. — See Eustace’s Tour through Italy.

hath so chafed my blood, that it will require more than that flagon to cool it."

Paladour, who had mingled among the crowd of the crusaders, placed himself near the entrance of the hall, to observe the effect that his presence might produce on the Lord of Courtenaye, — many motives mingling in his purpose; and, perhaps, the most powerful being that of discovering the secret of his destiny by some look, word, or movement; for those who, like him, are mysteriously wretched, place a wretched dependence on mystery for its development. So he stood near the door-way, when the cry of the pages, who bore cushions for the seat and footstool of their lord, was heard, — "On before my masters! — on before! — room for the Lord of Courtenaye!" At that moment Sir Paladour stood almost beside him, erect, lofty, and fixing on him eyes whose expression could neither be shunned nor mistaken. The Lord of Courtenaye had evidently screwed not only his courage but his countenance to the sticking place; for he passed Sir Paladour with a

graceful wave of his hand and a smile somewhat livid, and instantly hastened forward. At that moment the bright vision of the Lady Isabelle rose on his view ; and almost cursing the stormy clouds that, for ever crossing his soul, hid from it that lovely light, he was about to approach her where she sat, when seeing her so splendid in her array, and so gallantly attended by kneeling knights, that the floor seemed carpeted around her by glittering and graceful figures, — a feeling of pride and diffidence struggled in his breast, and almost suspended his respiration, while it gave added lustre to the burning hue of his cheek and the dark glory of his full and flashing eye. It is certain that love, in its first operations, is very unskilful, and even self-frustrating ; — the splendour by which Isabelle believed she might excite her lover, repelled and even offended him ; and the diffidence which is the strongest proof of masculine devotion, appeared to her like the effect of indifference or disdain. Thus they remained, with eyes averted, speech suppressed, and hearts burn-

ing for the communion which pride withheld each from seeking. Sir Paladour shrunk back among the crowd of guests, and again he felt his shoulder touched by old Sir Aymer, and his ear assailed by his rough but well-meant jocularly. "What! thou art equipped then, *cap-à-pied*?—Look to thy doublet; an' mine do not prove it a recreant, there is no faith in satin. Lo, yonder is the Venus of this mortal sphere!—but your schoolmen tell us your Venus had a hankering after a senior called Anchises. Look to thyself."

"I am not in the mood for jest," said Paladour, who felt the mingled irritation of habitual melancholy, and incipient, though almost unconscious, jealousy. "I pray thee, who are those who press so boldly around the lady? Methinks I have seen them before, though not flung on rushes at the feet of beauty, and glistening in brodered cloaks and doublets of tissue?"

"The chief of them," said Sir Aymer, "are Sir Ezzelin de Verac and the Sieur de Semonville, both inveterate suitors of the Lady Isa-

belle. Were a herald to blazon them, he would tell thee they were men of puissance, birth, and valour; but *I* tell thee they are fools — yea, fools of the first head. He who hath seated himself on the cushion at the lady's feet, is a knight, sir, of carpet and tapestry; marry, he was engendered of silk and velvet, and holdeth high respect to his parents, but he forgetteth his maker — a tailor! He kisseth his hand to the mere dissolution of his fingers; and for their resurrection let his next mistress answer, or furnish him at her own expense. His hose and doublet are of such orthodox cut, that he may defy the inquisition even of St. Dominic, unless some Italian minion of the new legate, full of fresh-imported vanities, pronounce it heresy; then will he straight doff his apparel, and thou shalt see him a true convertite to the creeds of gallantry newly devised in a conclave of the coxcombs of Verona or Genoa. For thy further despair, know, thou man of misery, that his tags are of silver gilt, and his pantoffles (I tell thee in sad and solemn secrecy) studded with pearl

and braided with gold. I bribed his page for the tidings, that I might overwhelm thee withal."

"These are fearful odds," said Paladour, smiling; "yet this Sir Vanity hath valour withal. He did good service at the siege of Andely; and I saw him make into the thick of our bloody feast but yesterday."

"Tush! tell not me of valour!—what care I for courageous coxcombry, or, at the best, coxcombical courage? He flourished his brand in pure vanity, as if it were a lady's favour. Tell not me of the valour of one who, if you hold talk with him of a field, turns on you with, 'Sir, I was not supervacaneous in that *hostium congressu*.'—'Sir, at the spoliation of that castellum, I wore as a favour a glove bestowed on me by the noblest hand in France—I nominate not Queen Ingelberg—marry, fie on my precipitant precocity, or rather precocious precipitancy!'"

"Does he dare," said Paladour, with kindling eye and cheek, "to boast of favours received from the Lady Isabelle?"

“Tush! he never lies under a queen or a princess—hold thee content; then will he say of a field where he bore himself right valiantly, ‘Yea, sir, I was there, and wore that day my lilac scarf purpled with gold; I may not say whose fair fingers wove and wound it around me.’ And thus he talketh—numbering his battles and sieges by the plumes and trinketry he was arrayed in; and deeming more of the feathers in his crest than of the banners he rends from besieged battlements—and of the hue of the scarf he wears, than of how blazed the red and gold of the oriflamme of France, when her chivalry fought round it only to bleed and die.”

“Yet he did good service at that fearful and prolonged siege,” said Sir Paladour.

“So did that figure,” said Sir Aymer, pointing to De Semonville, “who looketh as if he were carved out of a trencher, and the instrument had been a wooden knife: but, by Corpus, though he looks all wood, it is touchwood; he will be quarrelling, though it were with his shadow; and men say they will not walk with

him of a sunny day therefore. Every man hath something great to which he is born, and the genius of the Sieur de Semonville inclineth him most especially—to kicking. He keepeth dogs, not to course with, but to kick; he kicks his pages if his points be not well trussed—his chaplain, if he be over-long at mass—his sewer, if he break not up a capon handsomely. He is a Herod—a very Herod. He will deflower a scullion's lockram, rend a menial's doublet in twain, pluck a herald's tabard over his shoulders if his trumpet rung too loudly in his ears;—and should he wed the Lady Isabelle, let her set her carcanet aright, or look to her white throat, lest it be twisted on her shoulders.”

“And these are my rivals!” said Paladour mentally—“a coxcomb and a fool—a peevish fool!”

“Why, what the devil standest thou muttering here for?” cried Sir Aymer; “advance—approach the lady; thy sight will not make her swoon as it did her kinsman last night. Udsfoot! to see the boys of this age!—they

lack liver, blood, heart, and vitals; they are excuterated. Wert thou my son, and thy mother the chastest dame in France, I would pronounce thee bastard. Were I like thee, I would ere this have seized her white hand, assaulted her lip, carried by storm or mine her heart, body, and soul, and made the fortalice surrender ere it knew whose trumpet summoned it: on—on, I say, thou recreant!"

"I care not to contend with fops and fools," said Paladour, retreating proudly.

"Now, by Heaven," cried Sir Aymer, "thou exceedest in thy folly even that Amirald, who shuns these towers because he was a page here and had a quarrel with his lord;—on, to the lady, I say! Hear the language in which her suitors woo her; and if thine make not better music in her ear——He heeds me no more than I would one of mine own age, were I of his. How opinionated and singular the boys of this age have grown!"

"Urge me not thus," said Paladour dejectedly; "they are men, as thou saidst, of puissance, birth and blood, rich revenue and noble de-

scent. What am I?—a landless knight, and nameless—birth, descent, alliance, all unknown.”

“All the better,” quoth Sir Aymer; “the lady can imagine them—she can trace thee up to Charlemagne, or King Arthur of Britain—him of Elfland: on, on, I say! by Heaven, she hath sent a lure to thee twice; she hath glanced in thy direction—dropped her kerchief—her fan, and received them with an absent negligence. Again she looks in thy direction——”

“With a negligent disdain,” said Paladour.

“God’s wounds!” exclaimed the incensed knight, “with a disdain of *thy* negligence, thou meanest. Wert thou of another sex, St. Francis might have spared his wife of spow—thou wouldst have quenched him in a twinkling. Wilt thou yet approach the lady?—Death, that boys can thus brave a thousand men in the field, and shrink before a single female—a thing made of silks and smiles, paintings, pouncings, fopperies, fooleries, treacheries, and heartlessness!”

“ And why dost thou push me on such a shore ?” said Paladour, forcing a smile as he advanced.

“ To see thee wrecked — that is all,” — whispered Sir Aymer. “ Now listen how those fools are beating about the rocks : if thou utter not better reasons to the lady’s ear and taste, I hold thee no better than ——”

“ But where must I place me ?” said Paladour, hesitating, but still advancing.

“ Why, curse thee ! beside the lady’s chair : marry, show thine arm as thou leanest on the drapery — it is well formed, and may prevail. Doff thy cap ; those curled locks win faster on women’s hearts than barrets of velvet, and feathers set in aigrets of diamond. Now mark what folly her suitors talk !”

“ Oh, that I could utter even such folly !” said Paladour, “ since it seems to win her ear.”

“ On, then !” whispered Sir Aymer ; “ a woman’s presence hath ever a marvellous power in inspiring men to talk folly — and act it too.”

Thus urged, Paladour approached. The Lady Isabelle, who, wearied, mortified, and displeased at his apparent neglect, was listening with an air of vacancy to her wooers, at this motion raised her head; the attendant damsels interchanged smiles behind the ample drapery of her chair of state, on which they leaned; the fan of feathers, borne by Dame Marguerite, moved in *piu presto* time; and Sir Ezzelin, who mistook the signal, pursued his courtship to the lady "in good set terms," according to the fashion of his time, being all as allegorical as John Bunyan, as "affectioned an ass" as Malvolio, and as unintelligible as most love-makers by profession have been from the year 1216 to that of 1823; six hundred years' grace being quite insufficient to restore them to a solvency of sense. "Sir knight," said he, briefly recognising Paladour as his compeer at the siege of Andely, "encroach not on the sad hours of a pilgrim who is now journeying from the shrine of *mercy*" (a phrase well understood in those days) "to the valley of Malcontent. There the pilgrim wandereth,

failing of the shrine his vows were addressed to ; and there is he committed as a captive to the custody of cruel jailors, whose names be disappointed hope, defeated desire, darkful doubt, and carking care. Anon, they have their prisoner to a dungeon where his food is *fel*, his atmosphere *suspiria*, his drink *lachryma*, and his companionship the thereon-sequent amaritude of all discomfortable thoughts."

" Now," said the Sieur de Semonville internally, as he sat on his bench in the perfect perpendicularity of supreme awkwardness — " now, would I might be hanged if I could utter such a charm to my dogs when a witch crosses me in coursing ; marry, I'll beg it of him, and try it with the rats, that do grievously, as it were, infest my castle of Semonville : my grandame's spell against them is not worth—but I stifle its value for good manners' sake." (All this was said *sotto voce*, and neither De Semonville nor his hearers were a whit wiser.)

" It is a dear happiness to ladies," said Isabelle, flinging back all the glories of her

sunny eyes, and winding her swan-like neck towards her maidens as they bowed forward — “it is a dear happiness to hear the praise of their beauty in terms they cannot understand, and to be wooed in a tongue they cannot answer in. Sir knight of the bloody cross,” she continued, averting her eyes, and speaking as if she addressed an absent person, “how, I pray thee, wooest thou thy lady-love?”

“I scarcely know,” said Paladour, quivering in every limb, through which her accents thrilled; “if she understood not the language of mine eyes, I know none other in which I dare address her with such force, such fervency, such deep and burning devotion.”

“But it might be that the lady skilled not in such language,” said Isabelle; “how, then, wouldst thou fare?”

“That is impossible,” said Paladour, who felt, as he spoke, inspired and carried beyond himself; “her eyes were formed only to breathe of love, to talk of love, and to inspire love. Nor could she fail of an interpreter, when all that those love-lit eyes could tell

lacked but the interpreter of her lips. Nay, by Heaven, her eyes, were they but once turned on me, would have lacked no interpreter; for never did such light burn in mortal orbs—never did such beams pierce mortal bosom.”

“She must be wondrous fair,” said Isabelle pensively;—“was it for her beauty’s sake that the achievement was wrought which hath placed thee among the first and fairest in fame of Christian chivalry?”

“I had not seen her then,” said Paladour, “or—but I will not boast—since I have beheld her, there is nought that mortal may dare that I would not undergo—yea, accomplish—save the desperate task—to tell her that I love.”

“And how shall the lady then apprehend thy love, sir knight?” answered Isabelle, with averted eyes, and subdued but most expressive voice.

“If,” said Paladour, “she feels it not from my deep and reverential silence—from the dew that gathers on my brow when I see her—from the delicious trembling that deprives me

of all power when I approach her — from my hatred of those I loved the dearest — my loathing of food — my willingness not to sleep, but to dream — my inaptitude to all warlike exercise — from my fierce indolence, impatient, yet melancholy, hating the voice of men, even of my best-loved and heart-cherished friend, yet crouching to catch a woman's whispers, though it were her meanest damsel's — from my fearful indifference even to Heaven, as, while I bow to the image of the Virgin, but utter another name — if from my wildness, worthlessness, irritation, and melancholy, she knows it not, — then am I the most ill-starred of lovers, and she of ladies the most insensate."

"*O no, she is not!*" said the Lady Isabelle half internally, and dropping her veil between her and Paladour.—But these whispered words, which he would almost have given his life to hear, were drowned in the blasts of the warders' horns that rung out from every turret of the castle; not in that heavy tone that announced the approach of the weary messenger from

Rome, but with that loud and lively blast that harbingers a distinguished guest.

These sounds were soon echoed distantly, but distinctly, by the trumpets of the party whose approach the warders had descried. The hall was hushed, and listening, "It is the trumpet of the heretics, that seek to treat for ransom of prisoners," said Sir Aymer, laughing; "hast thou many to yield them, Lord of Courtenaye?"

"Methinks it is the trumpet of the legate," muttered the abbot. "Pray Heaven the ascetic monk comes not with him; then will the viands and flagons disappear in a twinkling.—Page, fill my goblet ere the worst befall—higher—fuller, I say! By Saint Benedict, one would think the monk of Montcalm himself were measuring my draught!"

"It is the trumpet of Count Simon de Monfort," said the bishop of Toulouse; "I know its sound."

Another moment removed all doubt; the jarring and creaking of the ponderous draw-bridge as it was lowered, the hollow tramp of

the men-at-arms, and the ringing hoofs of the steeds of mounted knights, as the former pranced and curvetted over its sounding arch, were blended not unmeetly with the re-echoing horns, blown shriller and louder as the object of their salutation approached, with the trumpets of the heralds, who advanced into the court to greet him with the high ceremonial of chivalric honour, and with those of the noble stranger's train, which were drowned in the war-cry of a thousand followers, knights, squires, and vassals, all pealing in wild and deep accord, 'Simon de Monfort—*Dieu et l'Eglise!*'

The heavy tread of armed steps was heard approaching the hall—the folding doors were expanded to their utmost limits by the pages—marshal and minstrel, sewer and seneschal, were all in their places to perform their appropriate rites of ceremony—the guests rose from their seats, and the Lord of Courtenaye was gracefully carrying the cup of wine to his lips, about to give as his pledge the health of De Monfort, when the object of all this homage

strode into the hall; and following him like skiffs in the wake of some mighty galleon, came knights and squires of noble birth, with their various trains of attendants; and, as they floated on in a tide of gorgeous and gloomy magnificence, seemed as if they entered the castle rather as conquerors than guests. The courtesy with which the company was prepared to receive the champion of the church was repelled by the uncouth and unnurtured fashion in which he made his entry. Armed from head to foot, and scanning the guests through the bars of his helmet as he would the features of a foe, he stalked to the board end of the hall, like an iron tower that was moved by some internal mechanism.

Arrived there, without greeting the lord of the castle, or bowing to the lady of the feast, he flung himself on a seat, and made signs to his squires to undo his helm and gorget. While this was performing, he growled internal curses at their unskilfulness; and, rending all asunder, flung the weighty pieces of armour on the floor, and disclosed a visage that ac-

corded with the promise of his figure. The latter was gigantic, of a clownish heavy make, but unequalled in strength; the former were coarse and inexpressive, but sometimes lit by a gleam of rude jocularly, and oftener by a glare of ruthless and savage ferocity. As he flung his helmet on the floor, his heavy but not indiscriminating eye rested for a moment on the Lady Isabelle; and the omnipotence of female beauty received at the moment that homage of *instinct* which is perhaps the most powerful, as it is the most sincere. As he viewed the fair vision, the jaws of the uncourtly gazer involuntarily expanded, his cold eyes twinkled and rolled in their sockets, and his vague and savage laugh indicated that species of admiration, which, wanting words, announces itself by a fierce and involuntary delight. This rude homage paid, the Count de Monfort began to give a glance of surly recognition at the guests.

“ My Lord of Monfort, we pledge you,” repeated the Lord of Courtenaye, holding his goblet high.

“ I will do you reason, Lord of Courtenaye,” answered the Count ; “ but first let me know those who pledge me, as well as thee. Now, by my faith, that star of beauty had almost quenched my sight !—I drink to thee, Lord of Courtenaye. And whom have we here ?—Ha ! the lord abbot of Normoutier ?—Nay, then, all the fathers have taken the field in one thick volume, and we may lay aside sword and spear, and beat out the brains of the heretics (if the Dominican preachers have left them any) with mere books. But what say the fathers to this, lord abbot ? ” he pursued, in a tone of rude jocularitv ; “ where be thine authorities, thy citations and quotations, and the devil knows what ?—Nay, if thou lackest motto for thy crusading banner, it shall go hard with my Latin an’ I do not furnish thee with a meet one—‘ *qui ensem capit, ense peribit.* ’ ”

“ I have thought of it,” said the abbot demurely, who sometimes blundered on a right construction ; “ but methought it savoured too much of carnal vanity for a churchman ; where-

fore, I pray you, cherish the motto for yourself."

"Sinful man that I am!" said De Monfort, not heeding him, "and have I overpassed the bishop of Toulouse?"

"Champion of the church!" said the bishop, "champion of the church! we greet you well, and give you the amplest benediction of the cause, whose noble and approved soldier you are."

The warlike savage bowed his head in short reverence at these words; then raising it, and shaking back his thick and uncombed locks, "Now foul befall the meddling priests," he exclaimed, "who put a mitre on thy head, and a crosier in thy hand, when the one should have borne the helmet, and the other wielded the brand!"

"The sword of the church," said the bishop, "is two-edged, and smiteth both ways."

"I wot it well," said the rude lord; "one edge to scare the wolf, and another to shear the flock. How now, lord abbot? Drain not thy flagon so fast! I am sore athirst; and

thou, though a crusader against the heretics, wilt not on such occasion deny the cup to a layman?"

"By the bones of St. Benedict," said the abbot, much incensed, "a most scurril and profane jest, *lepidè ac facetè dictum!*"

"And who be these," said Simon de Monfort, finishing his ample draught, "who cluster round thy board, Lord of Courtenaye?—minstrels or mimes, as it should seem by their holiday array. What pageant, what device, are they about to show us? Let them forth with their foolery, that we may laugh."

The bishop in vain plucked the mantle of the count; and the Lord of Courtenaye grew pale with terror and anger, as, gazing round, he saw Paladour's brow crimsoned to the roots of his hair, the Sieur de Semonville (who was choleric) lay his ready hand on his dagger, and even the courtly Sir Ezzelin start from the Lady Isabelle's footstool at this insolent sally. "My Lord of Monfort," said he, "you do my noble guests and me most heavy wrong; they are the best and bravest of the crusading host.

Speak for yourselves, valiant knights; ye have perchance met the Lord of Monfort at the siege of Andely, and the battle of Bovines, and other scenes which your memories can better furnish than mine."

"Noble lord," said Sir Paladour, "if my deeds speak not for me, I dare not be mine own herald."

"Aye, I have heard of thee," said De Monfort, scanning him under his scowling brows; "thou wonnest knighthood by baptizing a heretic brat, whom it were better deed to have flung into the flames."

"King Philip, thy liege lord and mine, deemed not so," said Paladour with modest pride, "when he conferred on me the noble rank of knight; the which I will maintain (less for mine own sake than that of my sovereign) in the teeth of him who avouches it was lightly won or unworthily bestowed."

"By the mass, a brave stripling to ruffle with pages in my lady's antichamber! Good youth, keep thy wit warm and thy steel cold," said De Monfort, with a brutal laugh. "And

who be those gay companions who seem to have dealt for their array more with the mercer than with the armourer?" — and his eye rested in scorn on the gorgeous habits of Sir Ezzelin and de Semonville, while the Lord of Courtenaye hastened to whisper their rank and names.

"Now, by my grandame's soul!" quoth Semonville, "if he pass further gibe on me, I have a foolish dagger here, that will not long lack acquaintance with his unmannered pate."

"Certes," said Sir Ezzelin, addressing the lady as if in scorn of his assailant; "certes, this rustical lord, or rather lordly rustic, resembleth his visage (which courtesy itself cannot term lovely) to some outlaw's hold; his eyebrows are the bartizans, his nose the portal tower, his upper jaw the portcullis; and when the rusty trumpet of his tongue hath sounded an alarum, out rush his words, not like a train of courtly knights, but as a sort of ruffian bandits to assail, and stab, and brawl."

"We, youth," said Sir Aymer, "are better nurtured. Marry, the Lord of Monfort hath

a rude trick of the olden time—our forefathers were but a discourteous race.”

“Ha, old Sir Aymer,” cried de Monfort recognizing him, “art thou there? Marry, I was much amiss not to seek for thee at the first amongst beardless chins and gaudy doublets—what, hast thou yet made peace between those near neighbouring foes, thy green head and gray beard?—never trust me an’ thou lookest not among those gay and gilded youths like a roosted owl amid a cast of newly-bathed falcons with their bells and bravery on—that beard of thine waves like a scourge to whip the boy Cupid from the very chamber thou hauntest—get thee a scythe and hour-glass, man, so thou mayest save the charges of a wooden figure of time for an abbey clock, or some old monument.—Thou make love to ladies!—provide thee first a bright eye, a curled head, a soft palm, and a straight back, and thou mayest yet win the grace of my lady’s bower-woman to swear thee her servant on the knot of her pantoffle; for trust me, knight, even in thy better days (I should say

thine earlier), thy wit was all too unreclaimed to pounce on nobler quarry."

"An' it were not less of a haggard than thine, de Monfort," said the knight laughing, but much irritated, "I would not fly it at the coif of a country wench."

"But whereto tends this," cried de Monfort without heeding him — "but whereto tends this?" and he looked round with an amazed disdain. "These be crusaders that sit around me, as I guess by the crosses on their mantles, and knights of birth and valour, as our host speaks them (himself a meet judge of valour), otherwise I might have guessed them for a band of troubadours. What, am I summoned to a battle or a banquet? The champion of the church looked for other greeting in these towers — where be the harness clattering on the floor and the war-steeds neighing in the court,—the claspings of gorgets and the closing of helmets,—the grasping of brands and the wielding of lances,—and all that glorious and stirring invitation to the high-heaped feast of battle that makes a warrior of a very coward,

and turns a warrior into a host? What, is there an Albigeois left in Languedoc, that the crusaders are sitting at a feast? My Lord of Courtenaye," he continued, "when I reached your castle, I deemed to see it moated with the blood of the enemies of God, and to note every knosp and pinnacle of your battlements crested with an heretic head (the best blazon they ever could boast); and now, what see I? — a band of revellers — a masque — a pageant: by Heaven, the Pope is sore deceived in the trust he puts in these crusaders!"

"*Thou* art deceived, unadvised lord," said the Bishop of Toulouse in a voice that stilled even the turbulent and ferocious de Monfort; "thou seest around thee men bound heart and hand, body and soul, to the service of holy church, and her warfare against her enemies. What though they be garbed in satin, they have felt the griding pressure of steel on head, breast, and body ere now; moreover, noble de Monfort," he whispered, "our hands are held for a space — the Dalilah of the Vatican hath bound the strong man — we wait for further

missives from the legate, or rather from his concubine, who hath some foolish pity on these Albigeois, being herself a native of Languedoc. There is a monk — they call him the monk of Montcalm—an ascetic—a very Eremite—a St. Simeon Stylites, or whatever saint you please to miscall him, who is inward with the legate. He outpreacheth the Dominicans, worketh miracles, and doeth such tricks that I dare not quarrel with him for the value of my mitre. The legate hath employed him to win a truce between the heretics and us for a space — mark me, for a space only. Now, in the name of Heaven, lord, since such reasons are uttered to you, restrain your free speech, and do no further offence to this fair meeting.”

“ It is well,” said de Monfort, who appeared slowly, but at length thoroughly, to apprehend the bishop’s reasons ; “ and my hand must then be in the pasty, and not on my brand ; but, mercy of Heaven, what stuff is here ! ” striking down with the hilt of his dagger a rich and luscious confectionary, as if to avenge himself on inanimate things—“ a *sotilte*, with streamers and I

know not what devices as high as a bannered castle! — Bear it away, knave!” to the sewer.

“My noble guest,” said the Lord of Courtenaye, “there are more solid viands at hand.”

“Look that there be,” said de Monfort rudely to the attendants, without regarding his host; “meanwhile fill me a cup of wine, and break up that pasty (that seems as if it held venison) to prepare the way for my next draught.”

By this time the Lady Isabelle, shrinking alike from this gross excess and obvious negligence of her rank and sex, rose with her female attendants to quit the banquet-hall, polluted by the presence of the brutal lord and his companions, who were fast following his example in insolence and licentiousness.

“Stay, lady, stay!” cried de Monfort as he saw her preparing to retire; “what, flying without news from the courts? — how queen Ingelberg sets her hood, and how many gems her girdle is studded withal — meet tidings for fair dames when uttered by courtier-lips like mine!”

"We will hear the court-tidings at our better leisure," said the Lady Isabelle with the dignity of offended beauty, "and we trust your ample draughts of Malvoisie will not have washed such precious matter from your brains ere the morning."

"Marry! my tidings from the court will brook no such delay," said the stern lord, exalting his voice to a pitch the ears of the proud beauty were ill accustomed to—"I bear a message from King Philip, which matters of higher import had swept from my remembrance."

He rose with fierce action from his seat, and while the Lady Isabelle, terrified and incensed, stood pale and proud, averting her looks, but delaying her departure—"Lady of Courtenaye and Beaurevoir," he cried, "I come to claim thee as the ward of King Philip. He hath vowed thine hand to the Lord of Auberval; and if his lands be not broad as thine, or his coffers filled like yon ample chests," (here the Lord of Courtenaye cast a look of speechless agony on the chests

that then formed the principal furniture of feudal mansions, and which in the hall of Courtenaye were loaded with plate, gems, and coin, so as almost to be immoveable), "I pledged word, oath, and fealty, to deliver the royal hest, and five hundred of my knights and men-at-arms shall be thine escort to the court of King Philip, though their absence cost me to spare the lives of thrice that number of heretics — a debt which this good arm and brand shall soon redeem," and he brandished the former as he spoke: "meanwhile," he added, crossing the hall, "let me hail the future bride of the Lord of Auberval."

The spirit of her high-descended race glowed on the cheek and lit the eye of the noble maiden, as, withdrawing her hand from his touch, she exclaimed, with a strong but an ill-timed allusion to the masculine and martial propensities of certain females of the count's family, "The dames of the house of de Monfort may be won, like the Amazons of old, by him who can deal the heaviest blows; but the ladies of Courtenaye are to be won by other

suitors, and in different wise from those who claim them as tributes to their liege lord."

Neither the incensed looks which the younger knights exchanged as they half rose from their seats, nor the majesty of insulted and trembling beauty, touched the fierce spirit of de Monfort.

"For my dame," he said with a hoarse laugh, "I grant she can furbish a corslet, and even wield a brand at need — good gifts in times like these; but for thee, thou gaudy, delicate, disdainful toy, what must I say to thee? This only — yield thee to the will of King Philip, whose ward thou art, and think not to strive with me. Will thy skirt of tissue prove a fence against a royal mandate, or thy braided tresses man thy towers when the boldest of thy warders would tremble at the summons of the royal trumpet? Nay, dry thine eyes, lady — I promise thee a bridegroom noble and valiant — the minion of the king — the very Hylas of our royal Hercules, as our school-bred courtiers phrase him; what would woman in all her fantastic cupidity, all her minstrel-taught visionry of loving

days and livelong nights, desire beyond such offer?"

"Her liberty," answered the lady with a voice of power that made her persecutor start at the spirit he had raised. "Her liberty — that liberty granted to the meanest cottagedame whose locks are hid by the coif, not bound by the coronal — the liberty which I would give to the daughter of the meanest serf who lives under the shadow of the towers of Courtenaye, to choose or reject her humble partner. And shall such privilege be denied to the daughter of the lordly line of Beaurevoir and Courtenaye?" — and the pride and spirit of her ancestry (the proudest of their day) seemed to dilate her form, and inspire her looks as she spoke.

"Thou knowest the law, or rather the will of the king," said de Monfort doggedly; "thy hand, person, and ample dower, are all at his dispose, or thou must redeem the pledge perchance at the price of half thy lands. The wars against these heretics have deeply drained the royal coffers; our liege hath also to watch the

movements of King John of England; and other matters, which may not be told to a lady's ear, have made King Philip willing to transfer some of the heavy chests that cumber this hall to make easy seats for his favourites at Paris."

"Lord of Monfort!" said the Lady Isabelle with that high-wrought energy of look, voice, and resolve, which, though originating in fear, has in woman all the effect of courage, "Lord of Monfort! Bear back my greetings to the king, and tell him thus, as thou art true knight — let him take lands and living, towers and towns — despoil my domains and enslave my vassals; and then let him despair of bending to his will the spirit of Isabelle of Courtenaye, nor deem that her hand and her heart shall ever be bestowed but upon him *she* deems worthy of them, without consulting prince or peasant on the bequest."

"Haughty terms and proud," said de Monfort, biting his lip till the blood came to curb his mood, "from a ward to her guardian and her sovereign!"

“ Say,” cried Isabelle, sinking on her chair of state that trembled with her emotion — “ say from a persecuted but not powerless female to her oppressor.”

A murmur, like a rising storm, began to stir and gather through the banquet-hall. The crusaders, who had been prepared to behold de Monfort with veneration, as the champion of the church and their leader, and to greet him with deference, as a peer of France and a warrior of fame, felt both claims dissolved by his insulting and brutal bearing towards a lady. The Lord of Courtenaye could brook his agony no longer.

“ Fair niece,” he said, “ I pray you consider you are a royal ward. I see how the matter goes,” he exclaimed, encountering the eloquent flash of her dark eyes; “ castle, towers, and cities claimed by King Philip, and the well-filled coffers fleeing, as if they had wings, into the pouch of some velvet-clad minion of the court. Fair niece, relent, and save thee from confiscation, spoliation, and the fiend knows what other terms the time

may devise for divesting thee of land and seignory, worship, and wealth, and suitors."

"Nay, not suitors," said de Monfort; "deemest thou not that were thy queenly dower diminished to the value of a vassal's ransom, thy lover would not still woo thee for thy fair beauty's sake, Lady Isabelle?"—and his voice assumed a kind of reluctant softness as he gazed on her.

"Tell such a wooer," said the lady, now in extremity between her dastard kinsman and his fierce guest — "tell him that his unknightly persecution will leave his bride landless, dowerless, and houseless, ere she wed him; tell him, moreover, that I am homely, disfeatured, unnurtured as a peasant maiden, ungracious to sight as a leper, or a dwarf hired to make mirth for menials. See — see if I am not!" and with that mixture of terror and pride that predominates in the female mind even in extremes, she raised her veil, and displayed the resplendence of her unequalled beauty, at the moment she required to be described as an object of deformity.

This effort cost her much ; for, repeating her last words, she drew her veil over her face, gasped for breath beneath its folds, and while her high heart denied her the relief of a tear, she felt as if she could have given the world to shed one, *if it could be concealed*. She did not swoon, nor did she weep, but a choked and tremulous sob indicated the effort she made, and how much that effort cost her. The murmur deepened in the hall. The voice of admiration and pity was heard in many a mingled tone. The female attendants collected round the lady, and dame Marguerite, officiously removing her veil, muttered —

“ An’ that Lord of Monfort be fit for better than to play the Selvaggio in a masque, or the devil in a mystery play, I am no true maiden !” As she spoke, she eagerly rent away veil, wimple, and kerchief, which her lady as eagerly replaced ; but in the moment that intervened, the beauty of the noble maiden, agitated, dishevelled, and suddenly exposed, touched even the savage de Monfort.

He “ grumbled pity,” and muttered half

inwardly, "By the rood, an' I had deemed the lady would have brooked the tidings so ill, King Philip should have chosen other messenger!" He added in a voice as if he wished to give consolation, but knew not how — "That the lady might yet at a desperate chance redeem her person from the royal claim, without the risk of land or wealth; and that had *he* been her champion, he would have saved her and her dower for the splinter of a spear, or her fair beauty's sake."

"We thank you," said the lady, recovering breath and speech by a strong effort, "we thank you for valuing our beauty and the splinter of a spear alike; at the same rate as the latter, do we hold the Lord of Monfort's courtesy. But thou seem'st to speak of a way of deliverance; if such may be found, and we with honour may accept it, we are willing to hear it, even from the unwelcome deliverer of King Philip's behest."

"Marry! I know not well how to make my discourse pleasing to ladies' ears," said de Monfort, rocking himself on the bench where

he sat; "but if a noble bridegroom and all courtly delights do thy fantasy such offence, there is a way of deliverance, as thou termest it, though scarce any may undertake that way without certain peril, or accomplish it without loss of life." It was said, that at these words certain of the knights who surrounded the chair of the lady recoiled. Perchance, her declaration that she would forfeit land and dower ere she would bow to the will of King Philip had been but cold fuel to the flame of their passion; and the condition of added mortal peril in her cause was, in ordinary estimation, not likely to rekindle it to a blaze. The Count de Monfort went on — "Thy chance, I fear, is desperate, lady; but to the tears of beauty I will not refuse to tell it, desperate though it be. As I parted from King Philip he said, as it were jestingly, 'Thou wilt find that fortalice guarded by many a strong warder — see thou do thy devoir if my hest be disputed;' and I, answering him in the same humour of mirth, replied, 'My liege, I will forfeit my head, if among the suitors that besiege the castle of Courtenaye

and its fair wardress, there be one who in tilt and tourney can unhorse me, or draw blood from between the joints of mine harness.' If such champion may be found among thy gilded wooers, summon him, lady, in God's name, to aid thine appeal, and here lies my gage;" and as he spoke, he flung down his glove of mail on the floor with a force that made the hall resound, and the Lord of Courtenaye rock and quiver in his chair of state.

"Gage for gage!" cried the Lady Isabelle, flinging down her glove of silk with desperate courage — "Gage for gage!" — the fall of the soft light glove caused no sound, like the clank of de Monfort's heavy gauntlet; but ere the echo of the former had ceased, Sir Paladour had seized it, and brandishing it at de Monfort, announced his acceptance of the challenge, "if the lady deigned to accept such champion of her right," — and he bowed with blushing and deferential awe to the fair being for whom he was perilling fame and life.

"Valiant knight," said the lady, her cheek

glowing with a hue, and her form dilating to a grandeur more than mortal, as she saw the chosen of her heart, the first and boldest assertor of her rights — “Valiant knight, I accept thee for my champion, and God and our Lady nerve thine arm to strike in the right of the defenceless and persecuted! Meanwhile, take and wear this favour for my sake; and may it prove a shirt of mail to a breast so bold and true!” And detaching an embroidered scarf from her ivory shoulders, she flung it round those of her kneeling champion. — Long before this action of the lady, the knights had started from their trance, and a hundred voices claimed the combat in the cause of the Lady Isabelle.

“Come on — come all!” exclaimed their giant-like antagonist, with a savage but gleeful shout of defiance — tossing his huge arms like the branches of an oak in a storm — “Mass! it were mere sport to encounter scores of such velvet bodies and heads of feather! I will requite their new fence with certain convincing touches of the old discipline of tourney — I

shall be but half-breathed to encounter a hundred of such in the career, and toss them about like tennis-balls — mine health lacks such exercise. An' the court of the castle be not strewed to-morrow with scarfs and surcoats, plumes and favours, like a tapestried floor, or the path of a royal pageant, say there is no true manhood left in France."

"A boon, a boon, my Lord of Monfort!" cried the Lady Isabelle, in a voice whose wonted tone of imperious gaiety was exchanged for one of anxious supplication.

"And of what boon may not so fair a suitor be assured?" said de Monfort, involuntarily softened.

"I claim as a boon," said the lady, "that your combat in the encounter to-morrow be the combat of Courtesy, not the bloody and mortal fight à l'Outrance." And she added, with a delicate and venial dissimulation, "Heaven forefend that the noble blood which should be cherished for the cause of holy church, were spent in the cause of a woman!"

“Thou wouldst have found thy boon hard to win,” muttered De Monfort, “could I have guessed its purport. Ho, minion!” he added, in a tone of furious disappointment, to his page, striking at the lady’s glove rudely with his foot, “take up that toy, hang it on some pillar in the castle-court, and let him that dreads to die shun to touch it with his lance to-morrow.—Lady, I doubt that this fence will prove sufficient barrier—for how, in the combat of courtesy that thou hast claimed, can blood be drawn from betwixt the joints of my mail? otherwise, my grant is bootless as thy boon was trivial.”

“I put my trust in Heaven,” replied the trembling beauty, raising her eyes upward—a motion instantly followed by her attendants, who devoutly crossed themselves, uttering prayers to every saint for their lady’s rescue.

“For thee, boy,” said De Monfort to Paladour, “I will turn pedagogue to thy vanity; and so whip this humour of valour out of thee,

that thou shalt turn as pale at the sight of a lady's favour as thou wouldst at the array of a bannered host."

"The hue of death must be on my cheek," said Paladour, "ere it turn pale at the voice of defenceless beauty, or the stirring summons to battle; — for the former, I need no instinct as man—for the latter, I lack no spirit as knight — yea, knight I say, and warrior, approved in a field where thou foughtest not," he exclaimed, maddening at the sight of De Monfort's cold and savage sneer.

De Monfort sat amazed, if not awed, by the power of a voice that pealed round the hall, like "a trumpet with a silver sound;" he set down his untasted cup, in which he had been pledging the abbot of Normoutier, and looked as if expecting the silent defiance he was about to meet.

Sir Paladour, after again kissing the scarf which the lady had bestowed on him, and then proudly replacing it on his shoulders,

crossed the hall, and stood full opposed to De Monfort, front to front, breast to breast, and eye to eye; for the Count had risen from his seat, and met this mute challenge of physical strength, by confronting the frame of an Atlas with that of an Antinous. Neither of them spoke — their eyes only darkly flashing, and deeply fixed on each other, uttered a language more than audible — for it was felt by the spectators — by the latter the issue of the combat was already anticipated, as they surveyed the contrasted figures of the champions, who still stood measuring each other with looks of mortal defiance.

“ Here break we off,” said Sir Aymer, who dreaded the further incensement of such proud and fiery spirits — “ and, lady, I will hold myself honoured as a self-chosen marshal of the combat of the field to-morrow ; so please you to accept my service — let the Lord of Monfort, of all these nobles, choose the other.”

“ Valiant sir,” said the lady, struggling to

assume her wonted tone of stately courtesy, "we thank you for the proffer—you will doubtless do the devoir of an experienced martialist.—For thee, Sir Paladour, we enjoin thee, as our champion, to perform deep orisons to thy saint to-night—we give thee this relic to aid thy devotions," she continued, giving him a silver box of curious workmanship and exquisite perfume, containing a relic, in the estimation of that age invaluablely precious;—"and in those devotions, forget not the name of her whose fair possessions and fairer hopes are trusted undoubtingly to the justice of thy cause, and the valour of thine arm."

As she spoke, the lady, with her female attendants, rose to quit the hall. Sir Paladour, as bound by his lady's command, prepared to retire in obedience to her will, tremblingly conscious of the solicitude that betrayed itself through her tone of ceremonious imperative-ness, and of the soft and subdued emphasis by which she distinguished between her fair possessions and her *fairer hopes*. He led the lady to the door, through which she retired,

made a low obeisance to the Lord of Courtenay; and then advancing for a moment, flashed the last light of his proud eye on De Monfort, like the glance of a retiring storm, whose thunders are hushed for a space, but menace a swift return.

"The braggart is gone," said De Monfort with a hoarse laugh, flinging himself on his seat, and calling for more wine.

"Term him so when thou hast proved him so," said Sir Aymer, whose superannuated levity had not left him insensible to what in those days would have been termed "a touch of true valour," displayed by Paladour.

"He is a valiant knight and faithful crusader," said the bishop of Toulouse, who spoke from the impulse that instinctively urged him towards physical or mental power, however discovered or developed, as a laborious and skilful alchemist would cull a useful ingredient for the alembic from which he hoped to extract the gold-creating stone or the elixir of immortality;—"nor would I, for my mitre, lack the blaze of his cognizance in the van of

our battle, or the dint of his brand in its heart, and heat, and centre."

At these words, that seemed to place no difference between a new-made knight and the descendants of countless nobles and warriors, the murmur deepened round the hall; and as a silent but emphatic answer to them, one hundred shields, bright with blazonry, traced from achievement, or tradition, blazed in the eye of the bishop; and twice that number of banners floated opposite to, above, and around him, (the latter almost touching his robes as he sat,) all bearing the memorials of far-descended ancestry and of valour, which has the power of uniting the past with the future age, and calling on posterity to echo the acclamations with which their departed progenitors have hailed the might and the memory of the brave. The bishop was neither dazzled nor dismayed — above the prejudices of his age, though unhappily not above its vices; his commanding voice made the advanced banners quiver in the hands of those who held them, and thrilled through

the bosoms of some over whose heads their proudest blazonry sparkled and floated.

“ Valorous knights,” he said, “ noble peers —and, if I may address you by a higher title, champions of the church, and crusaders in her sacred cause,—why spurn ye and scoff at a single knight? Trace upwards but for a few dark and perhaps fabled ages, and the foundation of the proudest castle ye own rests for its corner-stone on the grave of some sole distinguished being, who, had he been not known like this Paladour, never perchance had *ye* been known, and ye would have had no need to scorn at recent honours, having never known what honour was. The first and proudest of your line was one like this Sir Paladour, and in him is concentrated, dimly as it this day shines, that glory, to whose pale and reflected light ye look back through centuries for all the lustre ye borrow while ye boast of. By Heaven! I had rather be the bright and salient fountain, bursting from the mountain side, and sparkling in the eye of the traveller, than the muddy stream that stagnates in its

course, neither reflecting light from heaven, or bestowing fertility on earth, in its proud and fruitless progress."

The tumult, if not appeased, was hushed at these words, and each betook himself to the topic of the morrow's encounter. Sir Aymer, an expert tactician in the strategy of that age, arranged with zealous but skilful officiousness the ceremonial of the combat. The Count de Monfort drained cup after cup, pledging the bewildered abbot of Normontier, who, after doing him reason till he had nearly lost his own, began to ask his crosier-bearer if the Albigeois were at the gates, that there was such an infernal ringing in his ears? De Verac whispered sundry orders to his pages and squire concerning plumes, gems, and devices, and then murmured to Semonville, — "Thinkest thou that faded scarf of the lady's will bear comparison with that I wear to-morrow of green (the colour of hope) purpled with silver (the type of innocence)?—for I would as it were be most emblematic and exquisite in mine array."

"I think not at all of it," said his blunt companion. "Mass! I am thinking more of the hard knocks that will ring on my mail to-morrow, than of a silken scarf that will never brook their dint!"

"Oh! for a device!" quoth De Verac;— "some quaint, curious, and absolute touch of fancy inspire me now, and I will be its vowed slave for ever!"—as he rushed from the hall in a fit of amorous delirium *de re vestiaria*, leaving, as Sir Aymer said, his funeral dirge to be sung by all the tailors in France, and his bones to be converted into the handles of fans for ladies.

De Semonville followed, calling aloud on armourer and squire; and the younger knights hastened after, each with anxious and tumultuous orders to their respective attendants. The elder guests sat late; the Count de Monfort continued to drink deep, fearless of the event of the morrow; the bishop and the abbot were not slack to pledge him, (the quotations of the latter, always indistinct, having now the advantage of being quite unintelligible;) while

the lord of the feast (who, while he gracefully performed all the offices of a noble host, sipped cautiously the goblet his kneeling page presented to him,) sat with his eyes fixed on an internal perspective,—the body of Paladour breathless and bloody beneath the lightest stroke of the lance of Simon de Monfort.

“ She hath claimed the combat of courtesy for her minion,” he said to himself; “ but so speed me their heated blood and fiery spirits, if it be not soon exchanged for mortal strife! And then—and then,” he murmured, “ one vision of peril and horror shall pass from before mine eyes, and I shall be as though I had never seen him.”

The roar of the deep and late carousal, mingled with the din of the armourers, the orders of the knights, and the hurried preparation of the menials and vassals for the tourney to be held on the morrow, rung through the castle the livelong night from turret to rampart. Every individual felt excitement, and assumed importance, from the meanest wench and drudging horseboy,

through all the acclivities of the vast household, to the busy page, the anxious squire, the favoured minstrel, and the bower-woman, to him whose life was suspended on the event, and her whose liberty, wealth, and honours, hung on the same precarious issue.

Marshal and minstrel, proud of their expected functions, met with hastened step and glad greeting: henchman and herald hurried to and fro with hasty and tumultuous orders. The most forlorn of the group were the pale dismayed monks and priests, who formed the corps of the bishop and the abbot; and who, as they traversed the crowded passages to their humble dormitory in the base-court of the castle, uttered many a terrified "benedicite," (as the rude war-men, in passing, pushed them against piles of scattered armour and horse-furniture), mingled with many a prayer for their safe and speedy return to the placid monotony of their conventual life. The din and stir were not less in the court of the castle, where the vassals, with their assistants, toiled all night to prepare the lists, the

scaffolding, and the seats for the marshals, and a canopied state (as it was called) for her who was the judge of the combat. They toiled the livelong night by torch-light, to complete their work before dawn; and till within half an hour of it, the sound of axe and hammer, and the shout and turmoil, were still ringing through the court of the castle. This tumult, so wide, various, and prolonged, was augmented, from time to time, by the sound of bugles and clarions, that rung, from distance to distance, for miles around the castle: they were blown to summon or warn the wandering troops of the numerous crusading chiefs assembled in the towers of Courtenaye. They seemed the echo of that uproar returned from mountain, valley, and heath; not a shout of *La Croix Sanglante* and *Dieu et l'Eglise* was uttered within the walls of the castle, but was overtaken by a wild and wind-borne blast from without and from far. On every side, for leagues around, was heard the indistinct hum, or the thrilling shout, the war-blast blown fierce and near,

or the far-echoed sound of the horn dying on the distant hills. Through the depth of night the very air seemed alive with the sounds of martial preparation and highly excited feeling; and a dim but tumultuous vitality seemed to pervade the face of the country round, wrapt as it was in darkness.

There was a deep contrast between this fever of excitement amongst those who had neither life nor fame to risk on the issue of the combat, and the deep and lonely emotion of Paladour, as, long unused to repose, he paced his chamber till he was weary of the effort, yet still more wearied at the thought of flinging himself on that bed which gave no rest. It is the peculiar character of all mental diseases to be highly accelerated by external accident or local excitement, and such was his present state; the visions of his childhood, the strange events of his growing years, the mysterious pilot, the songs of Vidal, and, above all, his own dark and troubled and antedated recollections, rose and rolled like a dark

vapour over his soul. The image of the Lady Isabelle came gleaming betimes, like a moon-beam through stormy clouds; and he started as a benighted traveller would when she bursts suddenly on his sight, and then is as suddenly lost: — the gleam was transient, the gloom permanent and deepening. At this moment his squire brought in the last piece of his armour, which was to be worn on the morrow.

“ Will ’t please you survey it, sir knight?” said the attendant, as he stood, torch in hand.

“ It will do well,” said Paladour, without even glancing at it. “ I pray thee now remove thy torch, and thyself too — the moon shines brightly through the casement.”

“ And she gives fittest light to madmen, like thee,” said the attendant, retiring.

Paladour again, and perhaps voluntarily, for that is the chief error of a morbid and wandering spirit, plunged himself into the vision his attendant had interrupted. It was broken by the moon being suddenly lost

in clouds. He awoke, his foot striking against the armour, that was heaped in a corner of his chamber, and at the same moment his hand involuntarily touched the relic the Lady Isabelle had bestowed on him, and reminded him of the orisons he had vowed to perform that night. "I have neglected this too much," he murmured, "and better, in my dark hour, had I oftener had recourse to it. Sweet saint! then for *thy* sake," he added, bending before the relic, which he placed on the lofty window-seat, (above which the bright moon gleamed,) as he would on a tapered altar, — "Sweet saint! for thy sake I pray that to-morrow my life may be preserved, to save, what I value more than life, thy peace, wealth, and honours; and that mine arm may be nerved to smite their rude challenger beneath the hoofs of his steed."

While he spoke (as he long after told — whether true or not he vouched not for, nor required the hearer to believe it,) between the emerging moon and him there came, as before,

a thin cloud; and as it wafted aside, there seemed to lie on mist behind it a female form, stretched as on a couch; her bosom bare, and gashed with a deep and mortal wound; her body and limbs, as the mist floated on, wrapt in a shroud. Twice before had that form been visible, but never so distinctly. In childhood it had floated before him a confused mass, something that he was sworn to wound and slay, and that he often smote the air to catch and grasp. In advancing manhood, though the vision always hovered round him, a cloud on his brow, and a burthen on his heart, it had never been distinctly revealed to him but on the night he met with his mysterious pilot, and the evening hour when he parted with Sir Amirald; but he had gathered from horrid internal intimations, that he was born, and *sworn*, to be the sacrificer of some victim; that that victim was to be a female, young and beautiful. His mind and body collapsed alike under this fearful visitation, and he fell, still kneeling, but almost prostrate, before the relic,

whose fragrance scarcely revived his scattered senses.

“ In the name of Heaven,” said a soft voice, “ what orisons art thou performing, or to what saint art thou addressing thyself?”

“ To none,” replied the wretched youth. “ The saints and all good beings have, I believe, renounced me. But whom am I to invoke in thee?” he cried, rising without fear, but not without surprise, at the sound of the voice, as he turned. What could scarcely be called a form, or any thing that embodies itself to the eye, hung hovering in an upper cavity of the chamber, from which, it seemed, a pannel had been removed. It stood, so white, tremulous, and visionary there, that Paladour addressed it, in the spirit of his preternatural and wildly excited feelings, and darkly and waywardly ruled existence.

“ Speak thy message! If from Heaven, I submit; if from other power or place, I defy thee.”

“Neither of heaven nor earth,” said the vision, in a kind of sportive whisper, “but so mingled of both, that the wisest doubt to which we indeed belong — nay, we scarce know ourselves — so are the celestial and terrene elements mingled in us.”

“Thou art some light damsel of the household,” said the knight, restored to recollection, and recognizing mortal tones, if not mortal form, in the apparition — and who, moreover, pure as he was proud, valued himself on a virtue, then as indispensable to chivalry as valour. “I pray thee, minion, avoid my chamber, and betake thee to that of some losel page — fitter place for thee than this.”

“Were mine the arm of man,” said the figure, in an altered voice, “it would thrust that lie down thy throat, ere thou couchedst lance against De Monfort in the lists to-morrow.”

“In the name of Heaven!” answered the astonished knight, “what seekest thou? or

why art thou here in my chamber in such doubtful guise, and at such unwonted hour?"

"To do the hest of the Lady Isabelle," answered the voice.

"Of the Lady Isabelle!" cried Paladour, the fresh blood returning to his cheek, and new pulses beating in every artery, — "Speak! speak! and pardon me!"

"She wills thee—she prays thee, —" said the vision, with many pauses, "to—forebear the combat to-morrow with the redoubted and invincible Simon de Monfort. She prays thee not to trust to thy strength—thy skill—to all that she would trust, were it *her* life that were perilled—and—to forgive that fear, that never sprung from hatred."

"Am I all so lightly held," said the knight, "that thy lady repents to trust the redeeming of her rights to mine arm? Tell her, to relinquish the pledge were to avouch myself unworthy of it;—and soothly say to her damsel," he added, "that Paladour, in risking his life, risks not aught he loves or values."

"You wrong the lady's meaning," said the

voice, in a tone still more subdued, and struggling with emotion; "it was from aught but mistrust of your valour, or indifference to your safety, that she ——"

"I pray thee, maiden," interrupted Paladour, "give over this fruitless parley. Thy lady hath trusted her right to the defence of this arm; and weak as she may deem it, it shall be hewn from my body ere I resign that trust, more precious than life, save — to *her* commands."

"Then *I* command thee ——" said the vision; and the voice, which assumed its natural tone, and the veil, which in her agitation had fallen from her head, betrayed the Lady Isabelle. She stood for a moment discovered, and agonized at the discovery; then catching up her veil, and throwing herself into the arms of her maidens, who were at short distance, waiting the event of the scene, she disappeared; the pannel closed as it had opened, without a sound; and Paladour flung himself once more before the relic, on which the moonbeam emerged auspiciously, with feel-

ings that the purest religionist might participate, the boldest warrior might envy, but the most impassioned of lovers alone could understand. His devotion was not long undisturbed. Some inhabitants of the castle were retiring to their apartments through the gallery where his chamber lay; their loud voices and reeling steps, bearing attestation to the effect of the long-protracted revel. Amid the last of the group, Paladour recognized the voices of the abbot of Normoutier, and the guide who had conducted them to the castle, and who appeared to be attending the abbot to his chamber. Part of their dialogue was singular enough to catch Paladour's ear, as he listened involuntarily.

"I pray thee have a more reverend care of thy speech," said the abbot, with many a hiccup, and an audibly titubating march. "How near thou wast to betraying thyself to-night!"

"Or betraying thee rather, lord abbot," said his companion, who appeared to forget all reverence due to the tottering dignitary.

"But fear not, lord abbot, the wage is won,

and the peril past; and thine shall be the ample guerdon — thine shall be the red-deer of unknown forests, and the vines of all Languedoc shall shed their rich blood into thy cellars exclusively — yea, and amen for ever — the merchants of Bruges and Antwerp shall ransom their silks with the velvets of Genoa — the Jew shall resign to thee his simple profit of eighty in the hundred — thou shalt reign abbot of monopolies and usances — the crown of king Philip of France shall look dim before the gems that adorn thy meanest crypt, and Queen Ingelberg herself shall swoon with envy at the brocade that covers the curtain before the host.”

This was said in a tone that proved the state of the attendant to be pretty similar to that of the abbot.

“Go to!” muttered the abbot, “go to! thou art drunk, fellow! — why canst thou not take pattern by me? — Saints uphold me! here is a step I did not see. A curse on this broken pavement! it had well nigh overthrown me — hie thee to rest, thou swine, and sleep off thy

drunkenness !— but first help me up this stair. — Now, by St. Benedict, this is a miracle!— the steps double as I ascend, and, moreover, the walls grow narrower and narrower — every thing is wrought in this castle by magic — I was warned of it : send two of the friars to assist me to my chamber. — I am well holpen to trust to the aid of a profane laic, and an excommunicate withal !”

“ Trust to my shoulders,” quoth the companion ; “ place thy back against mine, lord abbot, and ’tis as great or greater odds, that I do not shove thee up the narrow stair, as that the Lord of Monfort’s lance do not pierce through shirt and mail of that unnamed adventurer to-morrow.”

“ All that avails not,” quoth the abbot. — “ By crosier and mitre, here I sit till I am fitly aided to my chamber !” and he seated himself, “ suiting the action to the word,” resolutely on the stairs.

The companion, finding the case thus desperate, and having other business to attend to,

flung the abbot across his shoulder, conveyed him up the stair, threw him on the silken coverlet of his sumptuous bed, without much heeding his frequent invocation of St. Benedict, and hasted again to the gallery, where the rustling silks, the creaking shoes, and the waftage of the fan, announced the presence of a female.

The mincing tones of superannuated flirtation soon discovered dame Marguerite; and sundry speeches of high-strained gallantry passed between her and her companion, who seemed to insist on escorting her to her apartment. The sounds, "Oh, sweet sir!—nay, in sooth, it is too much"—were answered by, "I am listed under the banners of the bold knight, Love; and in his name I assiege the fortalice of thy beauty, sage Marguerite; thus I take possession of the palisadoes," kissing the outspread fingers of the withered gouvernante, "thus I overpass the fosse, guarded as it is by the archers stationed in those bright eyes; and thus——"

"Thus and thus," squeaked the dame, "but

I vow it must not be thus — I may be ruined, *thus and thus*, and then what becomes of the family?"

"Ungrateful Marguerite," said her companion, evidently retreating with satisfaction at the slightest repulse.

"Ungrateful, callest thou me?" said Marguerite, "when to obtain this interview I have counselled and instructed the lady to seek the secret passage to the chamber of this knight-adventurer; and where their parley will detain her perchance an hour."

"Went she alone?" answered her companion.

"Alone!" exclaimed Marguerite; "not for the world: two damsels went with her for security — but come to my chamber, and thou shalt hear more."

"Would," muttered her companion, "that two damsels were with *thee* also, for *my* security;" and the voices died away in whispers, and the steps in lighter treading along the gallery.

Paladour could have smiled at this folly,

(not knowing what deep purpose was harboured beneath it), though he marvelled at such disorder within the walls of a noble's castle ; but his rest and his disposition to devotion were alike broken by the interruption. He sat while the red gleams of the dying embers were reflected from his armour, in deep but not painful meditation, till the pale light of an autumnal morning succeeded them ; and the shield, corslet, and cuisses, that had glowed like heated iron, now returned a pale and bluish gleam to the feebler light.

At the wished-for approach of dawn, Sir Paladour summoned his squire ; and after a brief but earnest act of devotion, prepared to array himself for the combat.

CHAPTER XI.

Since when, my watch hath told me towards my grave
I have travelled but two hours.

SHAKSPEARE'S *Twelfth Night*.

IT was on the dawn of that eventful day, that the figure of an aged monk might be seen by its earliest light, winding his painful way down one of the rocky hills that we have before described as engirdling the castle of Courtenaye. His figure, though not picturesque in itself, being only that of a stooping enfeebled man, clad in a coarse dark garment, girt with a rope, and wearing sandals fastened with the same rude material, derived, nevertheless, some interest from the scenery through which his slow and painful path descended. Sometimes he disap-

peared wholly among the heavy mists that gathered and dispersed around the hills ; sometimes he stood on a peak, measuring with doubtful and cautious glance the precipice he was about to plunge into ; and more often treading with a pace and aspect that at once implied weariness, resignation, subdued fears, and humble hopes, down the steep and perilous paths which wound along the sides of these rocky hills — some hollowed by the mountain-stream, some broken up by the earthquake, and a very few bearing marks of human attempts (apparently resigned in despair) to shape a track for the traveller down declivities almost impassable.

The mists increasing as the dim autumnal morning broke, the monk lost all view of his way ; and as the heavy vapours rolled like an ocean in foam beneath him, he seated himself on a projecting crag, looking like a mariner perched on the fragment of a wreck, and gazing sadly on the ocean that surrounds him. As the monk seated himself, his staff, as lightly as it was leant on by a feeble hand,

detached a huge mass of loosened stone from the cliff, which went flashing and thundering down the precipice, and sinking amid the waters of a dark quiet mountain-lake, sent its agitated waves in ripple and foam to the shore. At the sound, so abrupt and unexpected amid that deep and stilly loneliness, the thousand echoes of the hills awoke ; the eagle started from his aerie, and added his wild scream to the clamour ; and the mist itself, by the strong percussion of the air, parted for a moment, then slowly and dimly gathered and settled again. All then was still ; the echoes subsided, the scream died away, the lake lay still again, and the silence became more profound and touching from the contrast

The monk looked round him at first with that expression of wonder mingled with curiosity and awe, which the slightest phenomena of nature amid these her deep and profound recesses of solitude must cause — it was like the cry of treason in the chamber of a slumbering monarch. — “ And here,

even here," said the monk, "amid the stillness of the everlasting mountains, of the primeval lakes, the fall of a pebble can cause inquietude and uproar! The rocks make war on the waters, and the wide echoes take part in the fray—inanimate nature itself becomes hostile around me;—but how soon that enmity is appeased!" His mind reverted sadly to the assembly of the Albigenes, whom he expected to find fixed as their mountains and cold as their streams—pure, passionless, and moveless: his mission had proved them far otherwise. His eye glanced involuntarily from the cliff he had now descended to the direction in which stood the lofty towers of Courtenaye, shrouded by the surrounding hills and by the mists that mantled them from summit to base,—"And thus," he exclaimed, "must man wander ever amid doubtful evils;—and wherefore, but to show him there is on earth no certain good? Yon mountains shelter as fierce or fiercer passions in their cold breasts as those towers within whose proud walls lie

knight, and noble, and prelate, all on fire with unholy feelings, baptized in the name of holy church, and defying the God of Mercy in wicked honour to his name! — Wherefore is this ?” he exclaimed (his mental feet stumbling on the dark mountains), “wherefore is this, that from hovel to castle, from the persecuted peasant to the baron in his tower and the knight on his steed, we meet with nought that resembles thine image, nought that bears thine image and superscription — O God ! whither are we to turn ? Wretchedness in castles, and pride in huts — evil every where — good alone in Thee ! Dry up thus, dry up thus every source from which we hoped to drain even a drop to slake our thirst, that our burning and insatiate hearts may turn at last to the fountain of living waters, and feel that there alone it may be quenched !”

Again his thoughts wandered back to the congregation of the Albigensis, and to the events which had occurred during his sojourn among them. On his first arrival, his habit

had given such offence to the more zealous among them, (though they could scarce expect a visitant in a less formidable garb,) that it was with much difficulty he gained access to their leaders. The known sanctity of his character, however, proved available security for him even among those who abjured his creed; and he was at length allowed to state the terms offered by the Pope's legate. Then "rose the riot and the din"—powerful objections from the teachers, and deep misgivings of heart among the congregation, too well founded on former instances of treachery and fears of their renewal. The Hugonot deputies, when admitted to an audience with Catharine of Medici, were never more tenacious of security, nor with more reason.

But instead of offering the proud security of prince and peer and prelate, (a pledge too often violated,) the monk of Montcarm pledged his own good faith for the safety of the Albigeois; and kissing the wooden cross appended to his rosary, he attested the Redeemer of all to witness the pledge.

This action awoke the controversial spirit and declamatory zeal of the whole party ; and Mattathias, Boanerges, with the rest of the preachers, (the deacon Mephibosheth was not lacking,) denounced anathemas, fierce as ever were fulminated from the Vatican, against the abominable idolatry (as they termed it) of a senseless piece of wood : and moreover their wrath began to wax hot against the messenger of peace ; remembered injuries stung them — apprehended dangers surrounded them ; — the tumult became louder, and the language and gestures of the crowd more violent.

Pale, but not dismayed, the monk of Montcalm pressed the cross to his lips and breast, when a well-remembered voice produced a momentary suspension of all tumultuous feelings — it was the voice of Pierre the pastor. — “ Let me hear him ! let me hear him ! ” he cried ; “ I cannot see him ; but if ever there was truth in human accents, there is truth in that voice. — Let me feel thy hand,” he said, affectingly feeling about for the hand of the monk.

“It is clasped in thine,” said the monk, grasping the hand of the venerable pastor; his heart responding to the chord the pastor had struck, perhaps not without some latent anxiety for his own safety.

“The pledge of knight and noble, gauntlet to gauntlet clasped, was never truer than mine to thine,” said the ancient pastor: “thou art safe among us; we will hear the reasons of thy preachers: and tell them, on thy return, that depriving me of sight, I thank them for it, mine eyes will not be dazzled with their glorious array, (in which, I yield, we are much lacking;) and mine ears will better hear their reasons; for God hath recompensed the loss of one sense by keenly quickening another, so that hearing is now sight to me; for I swear to thee by yea and nay, I heard in thy voice a touch of sincerity, and feel in thy hand a grasp of holy warmth, that kindles the embers of an expired heart within me.”

“Now, holy blessings be on thee, aged man,” said the monk of Montcalm; “and though thine eyes be darkened, may thy mental sight be illumined to see the error of thy evil

and heretical path, which leadeth to destruction. Meanwhile I will not spare my rosary to pray for thee."

The monk betook himself to his rosary as he spoke; and the tumult of anger and vituperation which this action produced, was on a sudden drowned by the yet louder voices of the military leaders contending with the pastors of the congregation, each party fiercely insisting on *their* exclusive right to treat with the crusaders in the name of the whole body, and return the answer to their messenger.

It was difficult to adjust the pretensions thus hotly urged, as the military chiefs had always been accustomed to exercise the offices of preaching and praying, as well as of commanding and fighting, and had been raised by the exigencies of their warlike existence to a superiority in the estimation of the brethren.

The barbes, on the other hand, seconded by the deacons, contended that the privilege of pleading for the church belonged to her ministers, not to her disciples; and they soon brought their battle to fierce issue, for tongues in debate

strike as keenly as swords in battle. As usual, each availed themselves sufficiently of allusions borrowed from wholly inapplicable passages in the Jewish dispensation.

“Holy Heaven!” cried the bewildered monk of Montcalm, “how impotent are human efforts, and how baseless human hopes! In the solitude of my cell I had dreamed that all the world might have been one vast Christendom, living in one feeling of love, rejoicing in one hope of immortality: and now—and mine eyes weep to see it—not only are the Catholics set in arms against their erring brethren, but even amongst you, who boast your purer faith and closer unity, every man’s hand is against his brother!—What answer shall I bear back to them that sent me?—save that, since the clamour of your own contentions hath deafened you to the voice of warning and the message of peace, the war-cry of the crusaders, thundering among your caverns and your mountains, must rouse you to your answer.”

The effect of this rebuke was lost: both

parties sought to forget the shame of their mutual exposure, by joining their forces to assail the helpless monk; till some, more moderate, dreading a repetition of the tragedy of Châteauneuf, gathered round the victim to prevent it.

“ I dread not peril of my life—they will not kill a helpless monk,”—he replied to their assurances of safety; “ and if their wrath burn so hot, that nought but mine aged blood must quench it, I pray thee, reverend man,” calmly turning to Pierre, “ let my rosary and cross be buried with me. I hope not for flowers to spring, or odours to breathe from the earth where I fall; but let the sole companions of my sixty years’ pilgrimage be the companions of my grave, should thy brethren dig it for me. Scorn not this, I pray thee, as the prayer of superstition—it is the prayer of memory and of hope—they have been mine only wealth during many years of wandering; and thou knowest,” he added, with a martyr’s smile, “ a miser doth not willingly part with his treasure, even on his dying bed !”

"Thou art safe — thou art safe," cried Pierre, grasping with unwonted energy the hand he felt for ; " I am old, blind, and powerless ; yet, ere a foot approach thee, they must first tread on this withered body — the body of their pastor." — And as he spoke, he flung himself before the monk.

A deep silence followed this action, and Pierre felt the force of its appeal.

" My brethren," said Pierre, " to-morrow ye may pass to your mortal trial before the mighty of the earth—even those who keep in their hands the keys of the doors of life and death : if they unlock the latter, ye appear at sun-rise before your eternal Judge ! — And in His presence of what avail will be the trifles that divide ye now ? THERE the question will not be whether ye have baptized infants or adults—whether ye have sung the songs of the Jews, or the hymns of our more enlightened brethren ; but whether ye have fed the hungry, clothed the naked.— Alas ! ye could not, for ye were hungry, naked,

sick yourselves ; but this ye can do — protect and save the stranger ;” and he pointed with strong action towards the monk of Montcalm.

The appeal had its full effect : the multitude retreated, the clamour subsided, and the murmur arose deep and strong among the congregation. — “ Pierre, our pastor, we will hear him ; he shall guide us touching the matter of our treating with the crusaders.”

“ The zeal of our brethren may seem to thee rash,” said the poor pastor, “ but thou must needs yield they be zealous.”

“ I may not deny it,” said the monk, smiling, “ when they were well nigh zealous unto slaying.”

The pastor felt rebuked ; and murmured that their zeal might indeed be urged to extremes ; but that, at least, they must be allowed the praise of an unmoved and constant firmness.

At this moment, the multitude again lifted up their voices, exclaiming that they would hold a conference with the divines of the cru-

saders ; and that Pierre, the pastor, should be their pleader — their Moses to speak for them in the presence of Pharaoh.”

“ They call me Moses, now,” said Pierre, “ and yesterday they would have rent me to pieces, in a controversy touching whether the Psalms of David, or the hymns of the brethren, should be sung in the congregation.”

“ Alas ! reverend man,” said the monk, “ I fear thou canst claim as light praise for the firmness as for the zeal of thy people.”

The “ hectic of a moment ” passed across the cheek of the humbled pastor — “ Thou hast seen the nakedness of the land in truth,” he said, “ and I am rebuked for my confident boasting ; yet, credit me, these are but the infirmities of our evil nature, that break forth in all : and judge not of us, that we are violent, rash, and unjust because we are (what thou wouldst deem) heretics, but because we are human.”

The monk of Montcalm admitted the humble apology, though, perchance, his creed disclaimed it ; and the matter of conference, so

long disturbed and interrupted by the violence of the multitude, was now about to be settled in a few moments by two mild and heavenly-minded men.

“Bear back our message,” said Pierre, “to the crusaders—a message of peace will well become thy lips: tell them we will hear the reasons of their preachers; and that I, the humblest of those thou seest, (and humble we are all in rank, and power, and birth, and speech,) I will answer them by action, if not by words;” and he waved his staff, meditating perhaps the action which he meant to substitute in place of “many words” on the day of the intended meeting.

“Surely I will bear thy message,” said the monk; and, resolved to give no offence to the tenacious Albigeois, he told his beads in silence for the prosperous event of the meeting.

A chill seemed to hang over the pastor as he pronounced his assent to the meeting; he struggled with recollections at once painful and terrible—remembered massacres, under the guise of truce, floated before his sightless but sharpened vision, turning inward on me-

mory with redoubled power from the suspension of its exercise on things external. — “ And what security shall we demand for our safety,” he asked, “ before the lords and knights in whose presence we must plead defenceless ?”

“ Do peasants then demand security from noble lords and valiant knights ?” said the monk, who was not wholly untouched by the spirit of the age, and its high prejudice in favour of noble and gentle blood.

“ We demand it,” said Pierre, “ in the name of a thousand massacres.”

The monk’s blood rose to the cheek and brow that it had deserted for thirty years. — “ Thy rebuke is just,” he said, “ and we have both erred — each in cleaving too closely to the *cause*, not the motive — to the instrument in whose power and pride we have trusted, not to the Great Agent who gave them power, but not pride — *I* stand your surety ; let that suffice.”

“ And it shall,” said the pastor : “ we shall meet in that plain of controversy thou hast named ; and if that fail, where next ?”

“ In heaven,” — said the monk, grasping his

hand,—“doubtless, in heaven!”—and they parted.

As the monk, in his painful progress down the declivities of the hills that encircled the castle, pondered on these scenes, whose impression on his memory was not the less powerful from his recent share in their danger, he was interrupted in his meditations by the tramp of a war-steed. He paused, and looked upward, for the sound came from above; and soon, between the precipices of a defile on whose rocky platform the monk stood, but far below, came pawing and prancing a proud and beautiful animal, his broideder housing waving in the wild air of the mountains, and the bells round his proud and foam-spotted neck ringing out in time to his haughty curvettings, as he trod the rocky path: his fiery pride was reined by the arm of a knight in complete harness, who often, however, turned back his head, as if to trace some forgotten or doubtful way; while his plumes, floating in various directions with the breeze as he turned, seemed

indicative of the knight's irresolution, and uncertainty of the path he was to follow.

As man and steed, harnessed and barded, came thundering down the narrow pass, the monk of Montcalm turned humbly aside. His figure, however, did not escape the notice of the youthful knight, who, reining up his steed, (while his hoofs struck fire from the stones on which he reared and backed,) with humble grace asked benison of the holy man.

"Thou hast it, fair son," said the monk ; "and, if I may demand of thee a boon in requital of so mean a gift as a poor monk's benison, may I ask of thee my nearest way to the castle of Courtenaye?—for, in truth, I am well nigh bewildered in these mountain paths."

"The rather, reverend sir," said the youth, "that mine own way lieth thither ; but, meanwhile, it becomes not a layman like me to bestride a steed, while thou, reverend man, treadest thy hard and dreary path on foot : I pray you mount my steed ; you

will find him fleet as a bird and calm as the air it cleaves ; otherwise, I will guide the rein while you keep the saddle."

"Fair son," said the monk, "I dare well answer for your steed's fleetness, if not for his gentleness — but thine arm is better fitted to rule him, as thy form is to govern and to grace him. — I will rather pace softly by thy side — the knight to his steed, and the monk to his sandal ; and truly mine," said the poor monk, halting from weariness, "mine are sore worn in my late travel."

As the monk thus paused, looking up with an expression of interest, his coarse garments folded round him and bound by a rope—and the young knight in his "pride of panoply," with floating plume, and lowered bannerol fastened to his lance's point, reining up his steed, paid graceful attention to the humble form before him, — the precipice behind, the steep and perilous path before, forming a wild landscape to the two figures thus singularly contrasted, — one would

have deemed it an emblem of the martial spirit of the age doing homage to its devotion.

“And these sandals are thus worn, fair son,” — said the monk, observing that curiosity was blended with the expression of attention in the young knight’s attitude—“they are thus worn from my late painful journeys to the mountain abode of the heretics, where, in truth, they have been driven to sojourn by the severity — but that imports not now. — I am returning with a message of peace from that persecuted people : would it had not been so qualified by their rancour and hostility. — But of *them* let no man judge ; they are embittered by causes that I would had not existed. — But wherefore art thou again at my feet, fair son?”

“To beg thy benison, if thou art the holy monk of Montcalm,” said the youth.

“Receive it, fair son,” said the monk, “but not in the name with which thou hast, in the language of earthly men, flattered me. — I am the monk of Montcalm — *holy* appertains to Him who shares not his glory with his crea-

tures : but near the close of my earthly pilgrimage, I rejoice to bear the message of peace."

"Message of peace!" said the knight, flinging himself again on his war-steed, "message of peace! monk of Montcalm! By heaven thou bearest most unwelcome news—tidings that will win thee cold welcome at the castle of Courtenaye. Thy breath will be the coldest air that ever fanned the banners on its towers." He added, highly chafed—"All this fair array—this goodly and gallant preparation—and thy message of peace!"

"Alas!" said the monk, regarding his disturbed form and angry gestures with an air at once humble and commiserating, like a partial and overawed parent at the insolence of a wayward child—"Alas! and hast thou, fair son, so young in years, so goodly in form, drank thus deeply of the cup which this fierce age has filled with the waters of bitterness, even to overflowing? While thy mother's milk is yet warm on thy beardless lip, dost thou already thirst for blood?—Were it not

better, fair son, that the wanderers of the flock should be brought back to the fold by the voice of the shepherd, than driven to it by the yell of the wolf?"

"I am not learned in metaphor, reverend sir," said the fiery youth; "but I deem foul scorn that lords, and knights, and holy prelates, and learned clerks, should stand to exchange reasons with loreless peasants, and be baited with the jargon of their vile heresy — by heaven, I would convince them with my lance, and so close the controversy for ever. — Trust me, sir monk, thou bearest most ungracious tidings to the thousand warriors that are even now sweeping down yon hills towards the castle of Courtenaye — mark what welcome they will give them!"

"Be they warriors thou pointest toward?" said the dim-eyed monk, his crouching figure and tremulous hand, as he turned in the direction, making strong contrast with the spirited form of the youthful knight, whose mailed arm was extended at almost a right angle with his body, and whose eyes flashed through the bars

of his helmet — “ Be they warriors ? ” repeated the monk ; “ to my dim eyes they seem like wreaths of mist winding down the mountain sides.”

“ Wreaths of mist ! ” exclaimed the knight ; “ say thou rather thunder-clouds, that will burst ere long. — There,” he said, rising in his stirrups, while his quick young eye pierced through the mists that veiled the descending hosts from the eyes of the monk, as quitting their mountain encampment, they sped towards the castle, “ there float the banners of the good knight Sir Aymer du Chastelroi — alas ! that his train is so poor ; but such is his wont, he hath no power over his loose licentious band. — There fly the banners of Sir Ezzelin de Verac and the Sieur de Semonville — now, by Heaven, a gallant array ! — pity it is, that a fop and a churl should be brothers in arms to lead such a band. — See,” he exclaimed, with the feelings of a child, before whose senses one splendid pageant, passing momentarily, supersedes and eclipses another, “ see the

men-at-arms of Count Simon de Monfort, champion of the church, sweep down the declivity !— lo ! the standard of the cross, how it rocks and nods, as the standard-bearers wind through the defile—proud men are they who bear it the while.— Grace and good fortune to thee, holy sign, and to those who charge in thy van, and to those who uphold thee, and to those who perish in thy sacred shadow !— Be thou as a beacon in the stormy ocean of the battle. *Væ victis ! vœ victis !*— I see the banners of the bishop of Toulouse— woe be to those who meet thee, proud and mighty prelate, either in council or in the field ! Thy words, when thou speakest, are mightier than wielded swords ; and thy sword, when thou wieldest it, makes the lances of an army vain— terror and delight tremble in my heart, while I gaze on thy array, thou mightiest of the mighty !— Though thou art in peace, I behold thee as a foe—for there is that in thee which seems to make toys of kings, and tools of armies ; and when thou strikest thy boldest blow, it seems

struck for thine own high and secret purposes, not for the cause in which thou hast flung down the crosier for the lance, and buckled harness over rocket and hood ——”

“ In the name of Heaven, fair son,” said the bewildered monk, “ of whom speakest thou — and what is that gallant array of which thou talkest, and whereto wind they ? ”

“ Did I not tell thee, reverend monk,” said the youth, still fixing his fiery eye on the descending groups, and spurring on his steed, “ did I not tell thee, that this day a tourney is held in the castle of Courtenaye ; and Sir Paladour de la Croix Sanglante combats against Count Simon de Monfort, in rescue of the Lady Isabelle’s lands and hand. — May Heaven favour him who strikes in the cause of right and of beauty ! ”

“ Holy Heaven ! ” cried the monk, dropping in utter dismay his beads, and clasping his hands together — “ Holy Heaven, what mad and wayward times ! — Are there not enemies enough, but the crusaders must turn

the lances consecrated to the service of the church against each other? — well said the prophet, ‘ I labour for peace, but they make them ready to battle.’ Set on, sir knight, I pray, and in the name of Heaven stay, if thou canst, this mad battle, at least till such time as I can arrive and yield them reasons for the delay.”

“ You must needs pardon me, sir monk,” said the youth ; “ I know no power that may bind the arm of Sir Paladour from striking in such cause ; and thou best knowest whether De Monfort in his mood may be turned away by a churchman’s prayers. Try first whether they shake yon deep-seated hill, or check the torrent that thunders down its side ; and if they obey thee — despair of moving him” — and spurring forward, he mingled in the train that hastened towards the castle of Courtenaye, his vow of never re-entering its walls forgotten in his solicitude for the fate of Paladour.

He arrived at a critical moment — the

combat had already begun — the order of the Lady Isabelle's champions had been determined by lot, and it chanced that Sir Paladour's was the last. Hitherto all that had encountered Simon de Montfort had been disabled and overthrown.—The ladies who surrounded Isabelle began to tremble. Sir Aymer, who was the marshal of the field on her part, with compressed lip and tightening grasp of his staff, began in his need to pray vehemently, but internally.—The Lady Isabelle herself, who had mechanically bowed, smiled, and waved her hand to each of her ill-fated champions as they rode into the lists, now sat with unrelaxing features, and a cheek as pale as death, when the trumpets sounded for Sir Paladour's encounter — it was her last hope, but it was her first fear. Amirald, who had dismounted, and was making his way with difficulty through the crowd, was suddenly stopped by one of the lady's attendants, veiled, who caught his arm, and whispered, "Art thou Sir Paladour's friend?"

"I am his brother-in-arms, damsel," answered the knight.

"Prove it at his need," replied the damsel; "for the Count de Monfort hath made a vow to God, that nought shall mar the overthrow of Sir Paladour this day, though the laws of combat and of chivalry be broken to accomplish it."

Amirald eagerly pressed on — as he gained a post, Sir Paladour, taking his lance from his page, rode to the barrier — his tall but slender form was but too evidently no match for the gigantic De Monfort; yet, so stately was his demeanour, so lightly did he bear the weight of his ponderous arms, and with such graceful strength did he manage his steed, that every heart in the assembly beat high for his success, and every lip put up a prayer for his safety. De Monfort himself seemed to enter into the impression made by his appearance; for, though he had hitherto met all comers without any other preparation than that of changing his lance when it shivered, he now dismounted,

demanded another steed and another lance, and carefully examined that which was given him in exchange. He also called for a goblet of wine; and as this could not be swallowed without unclosing his helmet, a circumstance in consequence occurred that had deep share in the event of the day, and was exactly similar to that by which Henry the Eighth was near losing his life in a tourney with his future brother-in-law, Charles, Duke of Suffolk. While De Monfort was swallowing a deep draught, Sir Paladour put his steed in motion to approach the gallery where the Lady Isabelle sat; and De Montfort, mistaking this movement, snatched his lance from his squire, and flung himself on his steed, closing his helmet hastily, and so carelessly, that some of the rivets remained unfastened. Sir Aymer, aware of the movement Paladour was making, called aloud on Lady Isabelle to give her champion word, or smile, or look. "Smile on him, lady," he cried: "look lovely on him for Heaven's sake—throw him a glove—let down thy long hair,—smile on him at

least, nay give him a word — a word — a look. Now, God help thee, noble Paladour! thou périlest life for one who will not give thee a smile in recompense — did ever champion ride against such odds?" — Isabelle sat insensible, and frozen with horror, grasping the warder with unconscious fingers. — "Holy God! she cannot speak," cried Sir Aymer; "and his lance is already in rest. My lord of Toulouse, hast thou no saint to call to aid?" The bishop shook his head as he viewed Sir Paladour. Sir Aymer clasped his hands, dropping his marshal's staff — "the champion rides to his doom," he cried, "without a smile of comfort, a word of hope:" then glancing at the mute and pallid terror of Isabelle, — "Lord abbot," he cried, "out with thy beads, and call on the saints for succour! Holy St. Benedict, aid us in this extremity, and thy altar shall burn brighter, till the day of doom, with a candlestick of solid silver — nay, I will not stand with thee for gold, blessed saint, at this need, though the last rood round mine ancient tower of Chastelroi were sold to pay

the charge. Ladies,—dames and damsels, have ye no saints to invoke, no tongue to speak withal? I warrant me ye would weary all the saints if your lap-dog ailed, or your dove pined; have ye not a breath to utter when a noble lady is in peril, hand, land, and liberty? Minions, to your prayers, to your prayers! — nought but Heaven can save us in this desperate strait.” The words were not addressed to unwilling ears — the attendants of Isabelle were uttering prayers with clasped hands and uplift eyes. The ladies, spectatresses of the combat, forgave her beauty for once, and making common cause, uttered vows audibly. The abbot of Normoutier called on St. Benedict with his utmost might, and told his beads as fast as he could tell. Sir Amiral dropped his reins on his steed’s neck, and clasped his armed hands together — “ I make a vow,” he cried, “ I make a vow to go on a pilgrimage to St. Jaques le Grand barefoot, and with hair-cloth on my skin, so my brother-in-arms escape this peril in success and safety — so help me, God, and St. Denis

of France!" The champions met in full career. The blow aimed by De Monfort, right at the helmet of Sir Paladour, must have felled him to the dust, if he had been a statue of stone cleaving to a steed hewn out of the same block—but, an instant before it reached him, the chevron of Sir Paladour's barded steed (who had chanced to bend his head) darted into the nostril of the Count de Monfort's; and the noble animal, maddening with the agony, reared so suddenly and so high, that the lance of the unseated rider passed above the shoulder of Sir Paladour; while, at the same moment, the lance of Paladour touched the very point of the unclosed helmet of De Monfort—shook the heavy harness from visor to gorget—the giant form of De Monfort rolled in the dust—and a thousand voices thundered applause through the lists as he fell.

Those shouts were soon exchanged for cries of terror and dismay. De Monfort, maddened by his disgrace, forgot all laws of chivalry; and springing from the ground, as Sir Paladour, who had dismounted, approached.

to call on him to confess himself vanquished, he retreated towards the barriers, and snatching a battle-axe from the ready hand of one of his followers, he rushed on his antagonist. At that moment, with the speed of lightning, Sir Amirald, aware of the meditated act, not perhaps of treachery, but of ferocious vengeance, tore a battle-axe from the hand of a by-stander, and gave it over the lists to Paladour. Meanwhile, the whole assembly, lists, barriers, and galleries, were in an uproar at this unheard-of infraction of the rules of combat. "Cast down the warder, lady; in God's name cast it down!—they fight their combat *à l'outrance*—in the name of God, cast it down!" Isabelle sat petrified, turned to a statue, and grasping the warder closer as the cries redoubled round her, and sounded in her ears like the waves of a distant ocean. Marshal and herald hurried into the lists to part the combatants. Enguerrand de Vitry, brother-in-arms to the Count de Monfort, made all haste for the honour of chivalry, and in deep shame for the disgrace done by the count. Sir Aymer, on the contrary, who had

started from his seat at the first impulse, paused with conscious delight as he saw Sir Paladour snatch the battle-axe from Amirald, and approach boldly in his defence — nevertheless, he shouted with the rest, “ Treachery, treachery in the lists ! part them, heralds ! Lord marshal make in, make in for the honour of chivalry — part them ! ” Yet he muttered under his breath, while purposely delaying his descent to the barriers, “ Now down thou goest, an thou wert an Ascapart, or the twelve peers of France, and the knights of the round table to boot.” Ere the marshals could meet in the lists, this second combat had been decided — and as the first, by chance — for Paladour, in actual strength, the great requisite in such combats, was far inferior to his antagonist. The blood, streaming from the wound of Simon de Monfort, right over the eye, had dimmed and drowned its vision ; and with blind fury he heaved his battle-axe, sure of its first felling his antagonist ; but the blood flowed fast, and the blow, dealt in fury and blindness, struck into a lance that lay on the sands, with which the lists were

strewed, with a force that made the splinters spring into the air several feet. Sir Paladour's blow, better aimed, and inspired by a passionate desire, not only to signalize himself in his lady's sight, but to avenge himself for this outrage on chivalry and knightly practice, fell full on the part exposed by the still unclosed helmet; and then the

“Grinding axe, with discontinuous wound,”

wandered down the gorget in its descent, and the blood gushed from between the joints of the giant champion's armour as he fell a second time. Sir Paladour, his strength exhausted by the last unexpected blow, was now in no condition to make demand of the vanquished champion. He leaned exhausted on the breast of Amiral, who had hurried into the lists; but he turned his swimming eye and waved his broken brand in token of triumph towards the gallery, where the Lady Isabelle, starting from her trance of terror, flung herself on her knees, and then bursting into a sudden agony of tears, fell into the arms of her attendants.

CHAPTER XII.

———— I trust, right well,
She wrought not by forbidden spell;
For mighty words and signs have power
O'er sprites in planetary hour —
Yet scarce I praise their venturous part,
Who tamper with such dangerous art.

Lay of the Last Minstrel.

IN agony of spirit that he could neither brook nor conceal any longer, the Lord of Courtenaye had rushed from his place on the unexpected event of the combat, leaving to some of his attendants to plead sudden indisposition as the cause of his absence — and burying himself in the dark recesses of his secret apartments, he summoned their darker visitants round him on the instant. The astrologer descended from his tower; the female, that mysterious president of evil, emerged from the vaults of the castle, with whose secret passages she was well acquainted, and where latterly she chiefly abode, except when for months she wandered among the mountains, without giving.

on her return, account of her employment or her time — and both stood beside him, one, as usual, trembling, and one making *him* tremble. The astrologer had positively predicted the death of Paladour; the female seemed to exult in his safety, and yet to promise from it a richer fulfilment of the Lord of Courtenaye's hopes than could ever have been obtained by his death *at that period*; — their harassed victim fluctuated between them, cursed them, and begged their aid alternately, with the natural vacillation of hopeless misery; and finally would have summoned Thibaud and his attendants to spurn them from the castle gates, had not a thought been suggested to him at that moment that made him pause in the expression, if not in the purpose of his evil will — and he lent an eager ear, and glanced with a lynx-like eye, while certain whispers from the female, who seemed to enjoy alike her powers of command and of torture as exercised on him, trembled through his ears.

What dark counsels were given and received at that meeting, never transpired but by their

results. A report had spread through the castle, (favourable to the views of the Lord of Courtenaye,) originating perhaps from the abstracted habits and visionary language of Paladour, that he had dealt with the agents of the invisible world, and that voices had been heard the preceding night in his chamber at an hour when all earthly voices are mute. The menials of the castle, fond of the "wonderful and wild," believed and repeated it; and the defeat of Count Simon de Monfort, the fiercest champion of the age, by an almost beardless boy, seemed to give sanction to the report of the latter having been aided in the combat by a power *worse* than earthly. Memory is apt and active in furnishing materials for morbid and feverish fancy to work on — the songs of Vidal were now repeated through the household with all their mysterious allusions — the report of "the fiery arrow" was rife in mouths that dared not, the preceding day, have whispered the sound within the towers of Courtenaye — the Lady Isabelle herself, as she passed from the court of the castle to her

chamber to throw off her heavy robes, had paused ominously before the portrait of an ancestress, the most beautiful of her race and age, who had been wooed by a splendid and valorous knight, whose title and birth no one knew, though all had witnessed his achievements—and whose mangled corse was soon after discovered in the woods near the castle; nor had it ever been known whether her bridegroom was the fearful *loup garoux* so dreaded in Languedoc, or whether she had perished by a less horrible destiny, even under the fangs of *real* wolves—the bridegroom never returned—the corse was interred—the portrait still smiled in the rejuvenescence of two hundred years; and the Lady Isabelle paused as she passed it, gazed, and shuddered.

Nature that day seemed to rise in aid of the Lord of Courtenaye—the morning had been gloomy, but calm—the combat had protracted the dinner-hour till two, and all met at the banquet exhausted and spiritless after the strife of the morning. Meanwhile, the clouds that had hung over the

mountains all day began to descend in misty wreaths down their summits. These appeared at first like masses of wool, white, but shedding darkness where they spread; then assuming the forms of water-spouts, some descended in inverted cones on the hills, and burst in a deluge—others, perhaps, fuller of electric matter, wandered lower in search of some point of attraction, and sent forth flashes of pale lightning, and rumours of distant thunder among the valleys—at length, toward evening, the whole collected force of the tempest burst forth, and it was terrible—the mountains seemed to rock to their bases, and even to change their aspects and postures as the storm-clouds, flying before the blast, swept round their dizzy and shifting peaks—the rain, mingled with hail, came down in a deluge; not the rain that patters against the casement, but that which ploughs up the ground where it falls, and strews the ruined hovel of the peasant beside his blasted harvest—the mountain torrents came rushing down as if at a signal, and the roars of the bears and the

wolves, whom it swept away, were drowned in the roar of its flood; and this was increased by the masses of granite which, struck by the lightning or precipitated by the flood, thundered from precipice to precipice, lashing the foam into madness, and dragging down trees, overwhelming animals, and indenting the earth where they fell with traces that seemed to have been left by the primeval deluge. The banquet was thinly attended — those who had encountered De Monfort had retired to their apartments, sore and discomfited, and consoling themselves for their bruises by the reflection, that they were so impartially shared among a number, that no individual of the defeated band could fairly reproach a fellow-sufferer. The lady, according to a vow she had made when Sir Paladour was in extremity, had shut herself in her chamber to perform her devotions, which were to continue till morning. The vast hall looked dim and desolate — the fierce spirits, who had passed the day in mortal contention, seemed awed, if not subdued, by the terrors of the elements, and

each took his place in silence ; they were but few, and they crossed themselves often as they sat, and offered internal vows to their various saints for the overpassing of the storm, in which each heard pealing the remembrance of crime, or the summons of vengeance. The torches of the attendants waned as the lightning flashed through the vast windows—and the tapestry, waving to and fro in the blast that rushed through door and casement, gave to its distorted forms the appearance of gigantic spectres, who menaced the guests as they sat by their fitful and shadowy movements. As the night advanced the storm diminished—the attendants were desired to remove their torches ; and the knights, gathering round the vast wood-fire that blazed on the hearth, about which their benches had been placed by the attendants, began to feel that kind of gloomy comfort with which men, after a day of toil and a night of terror, gaze on glowing embers and listen to the gossip's tale, while the blast is raving at the casement and rocking the battlement, and the excluded world without

is wrapt in darkness and in danger. One single minstrel in the dim gallery touched his harp ; but, whether from impulse or command, he chose a wild theme of spirits abroad on the elements guiding their force and aggravating their mischief, launching the lightning at the chieftain's tower, pouring the deluge over the peasant's hut, scaring the traveller on the brow of the precipice, and luring the wanderer to the verge of the cold dark flood or the footing of the treacherous morass. The haughty spirits, who had a thousand times braved death in the field, subdued (as the fiercest animals are said to be) by the terrors of the elements and the lassitude produced by confinement within walls, listened with a kind of gloomy and passive relaxation ; and the Lord of Courtenaye, who saw their minds lowered to the very key he wished and was well skilled to touch, gradually and cautiously introduced the subject of the appearance of disembodied spirits, and of the possibility of holding safe intercourse with the invisible world. Full of the spirit of the age, which inculcated such

belief, rather as matter of creed than of debate, the guests eagerly embraced the topic ; and those who could relate nothing in support of the prevailing impression, listened with wild and breathless anxiety to the evidences produced by others ; and though all were traditional and obscure, and many trivial and even ludicrous, the feeling deepened, and the awe became general. Among the group there were but two silent and absent listeners, the bishop of Toulouse, a resolute sceptic, who sat on perhaps for that very reason, and by a strong effort concealed his smiles ; and Paladour, who internally struggled with the fearful ascendancy which early and undated feelings, combined with supposed experience, was obtaining over his intellects. It was remarkable, that though the conversation among the other guests was at first adopted incidentally, and without any appearance of interest, yet the interest now strongly increased — the embers were on the wane — the ball waxed dim — men could not see the speaker's face, or catch from his expression the horrors of his tale, or

how that expression was affected by their influence — the laugh, under which some sought to disguise their fears, grew fainter and then ceased; and the fire, though roused by the pages at the order of their lord, was at length reflected from pale cheeks, (which no other fear could blanch,) unclosed and breathless lips, and sunk but eager eyes fixed on the teller of the last tale; and no sound was heard in the pause, but the rustling of the mantles of the guests, who laid down their untasted wine, or started as the blast, putting to full proof the strength of the casement and door, seemed like the dark menace of the entrance of something that was steering on its pinion, and mingling its voice with its roar. The Lord of Courtenaye, like all cowards, grew stronger amid the fears he had inspired—and as he watched with anxious eye the hall gradually thinned, (while some retired to pray, and some lest they should hear what would keep them sleepless that dreary night,) saw, with unuttered satisfaction, the group reduced to all he wished

it to contain — the bishop of Toulouse, who lingered to guard his scepticism from suspicion — the Count de Monfort, on whom some dark convictions pressed, which he felt the narratives of others were a kind of silent channel for — the abbot of Normoutier, who dozed over his goblet, but who generally awoke at the end of a relation in due time to utter an ave, or make the sign of the cross — Paladour, who loitered because he dreaded, and Sir Aymer, because he hated the hour of retiring, be the cause what it might — De Verac and Semonville, who tarried, the former in visions of new garbs, armour, and devices, and the latter in downright honest terror, afraid alike of his bed, of the passages that led to it, of the very floor he trod, and almost of the air he breathed, for every thing around him seemed to partake of a hideous and preternatural vitality; — of the latter the Lord of Courtenaye recked not, but he inwardly rejoiced that the two dignitaries were of the number. The group was now so dimi-

nished, that they seemed in the vast hall, in dimension like fairies collecting, and in sound like crickets chirping round the hearth.

“How say ye, my lords?” said he of Courtenaye; “shall we have some authentic tale to wipe these foolish fantasies from our brains, somewhat that may be sternly credited? Nay, let us draw nearer the fire — the night is foul and the tempest raving still — better an hour wasted thus than in tossing on a sleepless couch, while the wind and rain beat heavy time to our restless heavings. Sir Aymer du Chastelroi, hast thou nought to tell us of what thou may’st have heard or remembered of these terrors of the olden and overpast time?”

“Of the old time,” said Sir Aymer, somewhat chafed, “I can remember nothing, being then a youth; but I remember a tale that chanced a century before I was born, and that will I relate.”

Sir Aymer's Tale.

“My grand-uncle, Odo of Chastelroi —”

“It was thine uncle Odo, surnamed the

Lion," interrupted De Monfort; "and the matter chanced about fifty years ago, which is rife in thy memory."

"Thou art right," said Sir Aymer, though discomfited at this rectification of dates. "Mine uncle Odo, surnamed the Lion, being at one time sore sick, and at point to die, sent for the prior of St. Bernard's to shrieve him: the prior came, attended by two friars; one of whom bore away on his departure a relic of precious value, which an ancestor of Sir Odo's had brought from the Holy Land in the first crusade. Odo the Lion, well so named, when restored to health——"

"That was owing to the prayers of the prior," muttered the abbot of Normoutier.

"He showed but little gratitude," said Sir Aymer; "for when he could brook his saddle, his first exploit was to assail the priory of St. Bernard's, and demand his relic, which he swore had been secretly conveyed away by the crafty friar. Odo the Lion was at the head of fifty men-at-arms — the prior came forth to

meet him at the head of the brethren; but it so chanced that bead and bell were weak fence against lance and brand — the good prior, by some mistake, lost his life in the scuffle; and by the same mismanagement certain torches, that happened to be in the hands of the men-at-arms, found their way to the roof of the priory, which was a heap of smouldering ashes ere morn. Mine uncle, leaving his train to settle the matter with the friars, set forth without delay for Rome, where, having obtained absolution from the Pope, he was enjoined, for penance, yearly to make a pilgrimage to the tomb of the martyred prior, (who might thank Odo for his martyrdom,) and to endow the spot where he was interred with a heavy sum for masses to be said for ever. Mine uncle readily complied with the latter enjoinder, which hath left the shrine of St. Bernard as rich as the tower of Chastelroi is poor — marry, for the former he commuted; for it was enjoined him to go barefoot to the shrine the day the deed was done; and that being in December, when weather is foul and roads

stark naught, Odo the Lion rode with his bare feet in his stirrups, while a henchman, bearing his boots of steel, (lest the weather should prove too rough,) ran beside him as he rode. Now it chanced that the shrine of St. Bernard lay sixteen miles from Odo's castle, and between them was neither town nor tower, or other sojourn than a hostel, which, however, was well-liked and frequented, being possessed by a merry old host, whose free humour, jovial songs, and quaint sayings, made his abode better liked than the towers of certain castles, where men say — I crave your pardon, Lord of Courtenaye."

The Lord of Courtenaye bowed in grim civility.

"He was named the host of the Black Hog from the letters on his sign, which ran thus —

'Je met en Dieu mon tout espoir,
Et je demeure au Cochon Noir.'*

Mine uncle, on his pilgrimage, always sojourned at the host of *Cochon Noir*. He loved

* Copied from an old French sign-post.

to gather with his train round the bright wood-fire, to list his merry songs, and quaff his wine, while the storms of December pealed without the walls, and to-morrow's journey lay before him unremembered. It was one night while they sat thus, as the storm waxed fierce, and the fire blazed bright, and the host, with broken voice and increasing girth and lungs, puffing away their last breath in merriment, tried to excite the sinking spirits of his noble guest, that a mingled humour of mirth and melancholy seizing on Odo the Lion, he exclaimed, 'My merry old host sing no longer — thy voice is to me like a voice I shall never hear again; the hand with which thou touchest thy harp is weak, the tones that follow its chords are broken; and thou hast rounded to such a size, and thy limbs are like those of a grasshopper. Trust me, my pleasant host, I never expect to meet thee on another December anniversary; and so I bid adieu to good wine, well-aired chambers, and cheerful converse on my next visit to the shrine of St. Bernard.' — 'And trust me,' said the merry

host, 'even if I be dead, the liarp shall ring in your ears, your wine-cup shall be filled, and, noble guest, your bed shall be as well-aired and as warmly spread as when you honoured my poor hostel last.'—Some maudlin tears were then shed—I say not they were insincere, for mine eyes gushed over this day when Sir Paladour foiled thee in the lists, De Monfort."

"Finish thy goblet and thy tale," said De Monfort.

"Odo the Lion was then conveyed to his bed," said Sir Aymer; "and they say he murmured, as he went, that he would slay every prior in France, and do penance after for the deed, provided that the hostel of *le Cochon Noir* lay in his way as he rode."

"The storm increases," said the abbot of Normoutier, starting from a dose. "Were we not best to bed?—not that I could close an eye—I must tell my beads all night."

"Such a storm as fell to-night," said Sir Aymer, "chanced the night that a twelve-month after mine uncle set out on his wonted pilgrimage: heavy rains, mixed with gusts

from the mountains, fell during the short day, the night closed, and matters grew worse—the guides, though well-accustomed to their way, lost the track—the deluges ploughed up the roads, and made every brook a river—flashes of pale lightning glimmered round the horizon, but there was not a peal of thunder; nought but the roar of streams, and of winds conflicting with woods, and the yells of wolves, that, though distant, sounded but too near in the watchful ear of terror. Odo the Lion himself, in attempting to ford a stream, was well nigh lost in the strong current; two of his squires swam beside to hold him on his steed, and by dint of a vow to the Trinity of Gaeta at his utmost need he won the hither bank: his train followed as they might—a light gleamed at scant distance, to which they tended, and which issued from the hostel, now a drenched hovel rocking in a morass. The noble guest was received, however, with joy, ushered to his wonted chamber, and his shivering train spread themselves before the fire below, after placing

one or two wine flagons they had saved on a table before their lord. After he had drained them, and warmed his chilled limbs, (for he still rode barefooted,) his heart began to glow, and his memory to return; and as he expanded himself to the grateful heat, 'he could not choose but exclaim, 'Would that my merry old host were here to touch harp or lute, and sing me some drowsy strain, betwixt whose changes I might wake and nod, and then be lulled again!' Odo the Lion, on his dying bed, and to an holy friar, but not of St. Bernard's, assevered, that as he uttered these words, (nay, all his life-time he told the same tale,) the dull low tinkling of a lute was heard in the pauses of the wind. Mine uncle had two companions, one his confessor, the other his squire;—the latter became senseless at the sound; the other, being a bold as well as a holy man, sat out this awful visitation. The sounds increased, and were accompanied by words that seemed to come neither from below the earth nor above it; still less did it resemble any sound on earth. Mine uncle was wont to

term it the ghost of speech. These words, so sepulchral, unnatural, and fearful to human ears, were, nevertheless, part of the welcome song his former host used to sing to his guest; and as they ended, my kinsman, turning his head, saw something faint, shapeless, and featureless, stand in the corner of the chamber — he said there was a film or gauze either before his eyes, (which he allowed grew a little dim on the occasion,) or before the aspect of that something; for, though no human visage could be traced, he swore it bore a kind of fearful indefinite resemblance to his ancient host. He added, that the garb was neither that of living man, nor the last dreary array of a shrouded corse, but a shadowy envelopment he could not describe. Odo, collecting his spirits when his head was averted, stamped for his attendants to spread for supper; they prepared to do so, but first applied themselves to the recovery of the squire, who recovered only to a state of idiotism. This Odo did not much regard — the table was spread, and the attendants were

prompt; but Odo observed one more prompt than them all, his eye followed the swift silent figure as it flitted around, and he saw *who* filled his trencher ere he could swallow its contents, and made his goblet sparkle to the brim when he thought he had drained it, so over officious was this mute attendant. The confessor himself avouched that there was *one more* in the chamber than he could reckon; and though he began and ended the tale* over and over again, still there was one in the chamber who completely perplexed his calculation, and whom, though he *saw*, he never could *count* among the number — he ever saw twelve, but could number but eleven. The confessor betook him to his beads, and my kinsman to his bed, (the poor squire being in a lamentable state); but he had not rested long when he was awoke by some one softly and lightly pacing round his bed, and ever and anon adjusting the clothes. Odo started up, and beheld the same shapeless, nameless thing, employed, as it seemed, officiously around his bed; and what was worse, as the bed was but

* Accompt.

narrow, the face without lineaments, the aspect not to be thought of without horror, even in the silence and absence of the grave, was now close to his — the dead one was his silent gliding chamberlain. There was no standing this. Odo sprung from the bed, roused his confessor, who was sleeping on the rushes, fenced by relics above, below, and around, and commanded his train to set forth that moment. The storm had abated, and they gladly obeyed; for they had heard some fearful whispers as they waited, and all were ready on the instant: some said a shadowy figure, without head or shape, helped Odo to his stirrup, and bowed as he rode off. I know not how it was, the confessor retired into a monastery, the squire was an idiot for life; so mine uncle, to save charges, made him his fool; but amid his fooleries he would utter such ghastly things as made Odo's hair rise round his scalp. Odo also withdrew his annual offering at the shrine of St. Bernard, and defied them, having impoverished himself by his lavish endowment for ever."

“Humph,” quoth the abbot of Normoutier, “he had the authority of a certain father for it — *cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator.*”

“I remember,” said Sir Aymer, whispering his next neighbour, “that is, I do not remember, but I have heard in mine infancy —”

“There he lies deeply,” said De Monfort, quaffing his goblet; “he remembers it well.”

Sir Aymer whispered on — “a wild tale; that on the annual night of that strange meeting a voice is heard murmuring at the tomb of Odo, (he lies interred in the chapel of the castle du Chastelroi,) ‘Wilt thou have thy cup filled, Odo?’ and an hour after, ‘Is thy couch soft and well-spread, Odo?’ The effigy of mine uncle lies on his monument in marble, his feet on a couchant hound, his hands uplift in prayer, his armed legs crossed; but it is said, at these sounds the stony lips of the figure unclose with a crashing noise like the opening of a sepulchre, and sounds issue forth, that many who watch at that fearful moment do not understand, and the few who do have never dared to interpret. By the mass, an’ it be so, I would

not choose to *rest* with my grandsires!" and Sir Aymer ended with his usual laugh.

"Laugh as thou wilt," said De Monfort, who had listened with a kind of sullen attention, "but there are those who have faith in such tales;" and he seemed angry with himself at the concession an inward and unavouched feeling seemed suddenly to extort from him, "My lord of Toulouse," he cried, "is it not the truth that disembodied spirits may be made visible to bodily eyes, avouched by holy church?"

"Doubtless," said the bishop, who always concealed his scepticism under a show of yielding to the grossest superstitions of a gross age; "and, noble De Monfort, perchance you have had some proof of the point on which we hold such dark and doubtful question."

"By the mass," said De Monfort, "something comes dimly to my memory since Sir Aymer spoke, which I had sooner were forgot! I feel like one whom sudden mention of a drear and desert country, through which he has travelled, brings back to the recollection of the

dark stream, and leafless bush, and grey unsightly stone, he encountered on his cheerless way."

De Monfort's Tale.

"About twenty years since I hunted the wild boar and the wolf with Enguerrand de Vitry and thy brother, Lord of Courtenaye, in the woods of Languedoc. We had toiled three days and nights in the chase; and on the evening of the fourth, as the sun set amid heavy clouds, and the forest shades fell deeper round us, and a rustling wind among the leaves betokened a gathering storm, I found myself separated from my companions, amid a path so trackless and overshadowed by interlacing boughs of oak and elm and pine, that I might as soon have made my way through the cloistered passages of a cathedral, which they much resembled.

"Mine attendants, to the number of twenty, were well-armed with boar-spears and other hunting gear; and they gave counsel to pass the night on the spot, where the deep sward

formed a couch, and the broad oak a canopy; and the glimmering moon, that now began to show herself between the trees, seemed like the lamp in my lady's bower, fitful and pale, yet beaming sweet light on the dreamer's broken rest, who looked up, and slumbered again. Such was the page's song, who sung at my knee while I lay on my folded mantle and endeavoured myself to sleep. Suddenly there was a shout among the huntsmen that they descried a light at a distance. I started up, for the mention of light was mingled in my half-begun dreams with the discovery of a nest of wolves or a troop of bears; and I urged on the knaves, half in my sleep, till we reached a thick avenue of trees, at the end of which opened a glade unencumbered even with a shrub—a wide, open, deep circle, from whence issued the light we had seen: the wind had sunk, the chilly rain had ceased to patter among the forest-leaves—all was still—the light burned clear, and as we advanced without whoop or horn, what think you we beheld?"

"A group of sorcerers at their infernal in-

cantations," said the Lord of Courtenaye, with a deeper interest than his tone betrayed.

"A band of pilgrims," said the abbot of Normoutier, "belated in their journey to some holy shrine — perchance St. Benedict's — marry, well fare them!"

"Travellers," said the bishop of Toulouse, "who had lost their way, and had kindled a fire to warm themselves withal."

"Ye err," said De Monfort; "it was a congregation of these same pestilent heretics, more than two hundred in number; and among them was placed on high a preacher or barbe, as they call him; and the light we followed arose from a pine-torch, which some knave-heretic held in his hands, while the preacher read aloud lines from that forbidden book of which our holy father has closed the leaves — such was the sight."

"And how didst thou deal with them?" asked Paladour.

"Askest thou how a hunter deals with a brood of wolves — sire, dam, and whelp, all helpless, and within the gash and gore of his

weapon?" said De Monfort, with a grim smile. "Askest thou a crusader how I dealt with heretics, unarmed too, and in my power? By Heaven, there lives not one man, woman, child, or infant clinging to the breast, to tell the deed of that night, save those who wrought it! and the hunter's boar-spears were as deeply dyed as the brands of knights in battle! They perished, kneeling as they were—none rose, and none resisted; and it was bright morning ere the huntsmen wiped their spears."

"It was a cursed deed," muttered Paladour.

"It was ten years after," said De Monfort, not heeding, or perhaps hearing him, "that I chanced to hunt again the wild boar and the wolf in the same forest, in the same spot, or near it. It was evening, when tracing the windings of a thicket in pursuit of a wolf, who, from size and fierceness, was the terror of all that country, I found myself at the foot of a rock without cavity or aperture. My pursuit was checked—I had dismounted, and was now on foot alone, amid a wildering thicket,

with no weapon save my hunting-spear in my hand, and mine horn at my side. I climbed the rock, not without danger, and saw around me nought but the darkening mountains and the declining day.

“ I wound mine horn to summon my train, but the sole answer was the echo from the dark hills; and I will confess, that at the moment, the meanest serf, who ran that day barefoot beside my rein, would have been a sight most welcome. I deem there was, beside the dreariness of the spot, and the deepening gloom of the evening, (now fast closing into night,) an unwonted heaviness that hung on me, and weighed me down. As I descended into the hollow or ravine betwixt two stony hills, (forbearing to wind mine horn, for the sound, unanswered as it was by human voice, added to the deep loneliness that surrounded me,) I saw on the summit of a hill, the lowest and nearest to me, a figure, small, mean, and peasant-like. I shouted to him, and commanded him to conduct me on my way. He descended in a moment, but remained at a

distance from me; and though he appeared to understand every sign I made, he never answered to a word, though I strained my voice to its utmost pitch. Still he beckoned me onward, and signified, as it were, that he would guide me; and I, seeing him in the habit of a peasant, judged that he might be ne'er the worse guide through those hilly passages, and followed at mine utmost speed."

"Heap on more wood," said the Lord of Courtenaye, — "the fire waxes low."

"Not so, Lord of Courtenaye," said De Monfort, "with your fair leave, such tales are ever best told by the dim and glowing embers. It was not until we came within the deep and narrow gorge, formed by two hills, rock from summit to base, that I caught a distinct view of my strange guide. I discovered he was in the garb of an Albigeois, such as I had seen, and I called and threatened louder; but though his stature was dwarfish, and his strength, mated with mine, had been as the thistle-down's to the whirlwind's, yet his speed so far surpassed mine, that, panting, I followed

him as I might. My mood hath been always hot, and impatient of the peasant's insolence. I strained my utmost strength to overtake and slay him on the spot, (even though I might wander among the mountains till I perished,) but he was ever a bow-shot length before me, and still he waved and beckoned with such more than human eagerness, that, incensed and well-nigh exhausted as I was, I could not choose but follow. Thrice I flung mine hunting-spear after him, and I was then no erring marksman, but twice it fell far short of him; the third time it seemed to pass through his body, yet still he pressed on; and when I reached the spot, it stood quivering and bloodless amid a bunch of fern. At this moment the figure had reached the summit of the path that wound between those rocky hills; and he stood there fixed as them, and beckoning me to advance—I did so, sure that when I reached him I would force him to speak, or make him dumb for ever. I was within arm's length of that dwarfish figure, which I now could distinctly see between the receding hills, and

nought but the twilight sky behind his dusky form, when, uttering a faint and wailing cry, he bounded from where he stood, and plunged into a dark glen, where the pine and larch growing thickly hid him from my sight in a moment. I know not, nor can I tell, nor do I distinctly remember, the desperate and defying feeling in which I plunged after him. I sprung from crag to crag on my descent with a speed and safety that seemed to myself supernatural: the thick dark wood in the hollow opened its bosom to receive me — as I entered it, my brain cooled, and my senses settled; and I saw, as distinctly as I now see this group, in the wide opening glade, the same band of heretics, barbe, torch-bearer, and all, in a kind of ghastly mockery of devotion — they looked, but not with the same visages; they prayed, but not with the same voices; and they turned on me, but — oh! they were the same, and not the same. Maddened at the sight, as I am now by the bare recital, I rushed among them — I thought I did — but all rose to meet me, the barbe with his book, the mother with her child,

the father with his young daughter, the crone with her grandchild, the stripling with his boy-brother, and the aged with their gray shaking locks — and all were as the dead. I heard the clattering bones — I saw the eyeless sockets, the bare and grinning jaws. — I would sooner have rushed on a thousand spears. — I raised mine hunting-spear, but their cold eyes seemed to have blunted its point and withered the hand that held it. — They gathered round — they closed in on me — St. Mary ! I hear them now !” he cried, clasping his hands on his rough forehead, and bending forward for a moment, as if a viewless choir were still pealing in his ears.

“ I know not how it fared with me — my fellows found me stretched on the sward, in a swoon, they said,” — he added in a more subdued voice, but without raising his head, “ and I survived it. — But,” he cried, suddenly lifting up head and figure at once, and bursting into a wild laugh, “ was it not — might it not be all a dream, a vision ? — how sayest thou, lord abbot ?”

“That it was a mere device of the foul fiend,” quoth the abbot: “regard it no more than I do this empty cup; fill it, knave!”

“But, my Lord of Courtenaye,” said De Monfort, whose brief fit of superstitious remorse was over, “you who have urged us to those dark tales could yourself tell a darker still. What was that mysterious fate that befell my lord, your brother? Men have spoken strangely of it. Nay, never look on the tapestry, man, as if its waving chided you, or on the portraits as if they would start from their frames. — Tell us truly how perished the Lord of Courtenaye. Fellow, fill your lord’s goblet! — he looks deadly pale.”

“Fill my lord’s goblet, knave, dost thou hear?” said the abbot, from association: “*in vino veritas*.”

“For a vile marksman, thou hast for once hit the white,” said the bishop of Toulouse, internally. — “My Lord of Courtenaye, we wait for your tale;” and his eye and voice assumed a peculiar expression, that made the

Lord of Courtenaye quit his untasted goblet, and, though dreadfully pale, enter abruptly on the subject he was thus forced to.

“ My brother,” he said, or rather whispered, “ was a bold and approved warrior, and a true Catholic ; but he had ever a spirit and will to pry into those things that are hidden from man.”

“ I trust that spirit has not descended to his family,” said the bishop somewhat sternly, and yet hesitatingly, as if he felt the remark might be retorted.

“ My brother’s death,” said the Lord of Courtenaye, shuddering, “ has been loudly mouthed, and darkly whispered, as the talkers were more or less confident or ignorant — but I know the truth !”

“ As if truth ever came out of that mouth !” muttered the bishop : “ let us have it then, we pray you.”

“ My departed brother was fond of those dark studies I have hinted at,” said the Lord of Courtenaye, commencing his solemn tale.

“ From which of his family did he learn that taste?” said the abbot of Normoutier in his *insouciance*.

No one heeded him, and the Lord of Courtenaye proceeded — “ Every year, it was his wont, (I mean in the latter troubled and unhappy years of his life,) on the eve of St. Michael — but I tell my tale ill, noble hearers.—I should have first related that there was in the neighbourhood of our castle of Beaurevoir a lake that lay among the mountains—a dark, still, gloomy sheet of water, that the traveller started when he beheld in such a spot, where he looked only for a yawning gorge amid the stony hills: — it was said that in its waters no fish lived, and no fowl dipped its wing—that it bore on its dark surface only the reflection of the rocks that impended over it, and of the twilight sky, which their precipices darkened even at noon into somewhat like the shadows of evening. No peasant built his hut near the spot; the wanderer who had lost his way struck into

another path, ere he would follow that, even at midnight.—”

“Enough of the spot,” said the bishop of Toulouse; “we know it well.”

“It was my brother’s wont,” continued the Lord of Courtenaye, in a still more suppressed and hollow tone, “on the eve of St. Michael, as I have said, to embark on that lake in a boat rowed by a single vassal—my brother ever rowed back alone. The following year he embarked at the same period with another vassal, and returned again alone. Small count is held of vassals’ lives; but I know not how it was, when many such visits had chanced, neither the scourge, nor torture, could force a vassal, old or young,——” he paused, and then slowly resumed—“In the stormy twilight of an autumnal eve, the eve of St. Michael, (all day the wind had roared, and the waves of the lake were crested with foam, and the sky was dark as December;) on such an evening my brother rowed forth on the lake alone.”

"And when did he return?" asked the abbot of Normoutier, starting from a doze.

"*Never!*" answered the bishop of Toulouse: — "My Lord of Courtenaye, have ye aught further to communicate concerning your brother's fate?"

"Nought," said the Lord of Courtenaye, applying his napkin to his eyes, "save the profound grief in which his mysterious disappearance plunged our house."

At this moment, a laugh of derision, wild and fiendlike, burst from behind the tapestry of the hall; nor did it cease till every ear had distinctly heard it. The contrast was so strong as to force itself on the senses of all whom these long tales had left awake. At the close of Sir Aymer's and de Monfort's relations, wild and vague as they were, the silence deepened, the group gathered closer, the very rushing of the wind, as it shook the hangings, was watched with a kind of jealousy — all had been still, as if inanimate things themselves had become mute and anxious listeners; but the laugh that followed the Lord of Courtenaye's tale of

his brother's fate seemed to announce other than human listeners to his words.

"That was a ghastly sound," said the abbot, effectually startled from his doze.

"It was the wind howling through the passages," said Sir Aymer : "our talk hath been dismal, and such themes make men eager interpreters of sad and boding sounds. I have heard the wind sweep over a battle-field while I rode in my harness ; but in my lonely tower of Chastelroy, its very whispers had sounded to me like the wailings of the dead."

"I have heard," said the bishop with a stern smile, "of winds that sighed, or moaned, yea, uttered all sounds that imitated the tones of human suffering, from the wail of the infant, a span long, to the dying groan of man in the strength of maturity ; but never did I hear before the winds accused of mocking the sound of human laughter."

"And what other sounds," said the Lord of Courtenaye, who perceived that the excited feelings of his guests required a sudden change to work them to his purpose ; "and what other

sounds would you have to join in the burthen of idle tales but those of laughter? Methinks such tales told by dim light give pleasure like that the cricket gives when he chirps faintly on the hearth, and the slumbering warrior stretched near it knows not whether that, or the minstrel's drowsy note, is humming in his ears. But what, my noble guests, if we turn this to matter of mirth, after the sad and solemn talk that hath held us so long? what if we prove these things but toys—fables—mere vanities? The proof lies within a moment's trial. There is one, a woman too, whom some hold a sorceress, and some mad—she hath shown some curious tricks of art. Please you, my lords and knights, to see them; 'twill be as pastime after our sad supper. She is now in the vaults of the castle—indeed she tenanteth chiefly in vaults or in dismal places. What say ye, Lords?—shall we visit her?—shall we hear what she hath to tell, that we may mock at it and her? Methinks it will be a merry period to our sad controversy.”

The guests shuddered as he spoke; but the

such hues and drenched in such vapours, that the devil himself could not abide them, were he to tilt for recovery of his former state."

"I understand not that," said Semonville; nevertheless I would risk the meeting to-night, but I have not my grandame's spell about me—I would it were here; thou shouldst then see how I would confront and confound the sorceress."

As they whispered thus, the Lord of Courtenaye had raised the tapestry that covered a small and narrow arched door in the hall, and looked back as if to assure them that some preparation would be necessary.

This door opened on a nook, through which Thibaud passed angrily, a torch in his hand, and exclaiming, "Art thou mad, Lord of Courtenaye?—dost thou bring churchmen to witness that for which, in their holy charity, they might commend thee to the care of the Inquisition? Remember that though Chateauneuf is dead, his spirit may yet kindle a fire in Languedoc, whose flame will overtop thy highest towers;" and he parted, his speech

being as brief as the glare of his torch, which he flashed full before his intimidated lord. The Lord of Courtenaye paused for a moment, and dreaded to proceed in his purpose without holding advice with him — his lips were half open to call him back, even to entreat him—then he reflected that the topics he would have urged on Thibaud were such as perhaps, if suppressed or concealed, would give him at a future day added power over his vassal. He had the presence of dignitaries of the Catholic church to bear him out in all they might see or imagine they saw : their presence was ample sanction against the anger of the church. Another motive trembled at the bottom of his coward heart : he wished for witnesses to support his courage during this terrible scene ; but that was a motive he dared not avow to his guests, or even to himself. So, opening the narrow door again, and looking into the hall, he whispered to Verac and Semonville, “ You go not with us, noble knights.” They nodded a refusal.

The door then admitted successively the

bishop of Toulouse, on whose brow sat a mingled cloud of pride, daring hopes, and something that resembled anxiety—it was impossible it could be fear—the Count de Monfort, turbid, dark, and restless as ever, went on like a wave in a storm rushing to encounter a rock, though fated to perish against it; he had not mental power to analyse his feelings to their elements, but he felt excitement: a summons to a new species of trial and of peril, and a spirit that defied them both to extremity—both of them (though of far different characters and habits) verified the words of our great dramatist:

It ever is the marked propensity
Of restless and aspiring minds to look
Into the secrets of futurity.

ETHWALD.

Then followed the abbot, supported by two attendants, whose office was on this occasion no sinecure, exclaiming loudly against *loup garoux*, and all other goblins and fiends whatever, let their operations and occupations be what they would.

“Come, fiend or fury!” he cried, brandish-

ing his crosier, "I defy them in the name of St. Benedict!—shew me these spirits!—I will exorcise thy vaults for thee, Lord of Courtenaye!—Bear me gently down the steps, I pray ye.—Oh ghost! thou art no ghost of this world; I promise thee, ere another hour hath struck—gently ever, I pray ye!"

Paládour went last. The door was closed, the tapestry dropt over it, and Verac and Semonville were left the sole tenants of the hall.

CHAPTER XIII.

Double, double, toil and trouble,
Fire burn, and caldron bubble.

Macbeth.

THE belief in the power of witchcraft, and its influence as connected with that belief, were during the dark ages in a state of fluctuation and obscurity, equally puzzling to the historian and the writer of romances.

The art was denounced as unlawful and damnable, yet often resorted to by those who reviled it the most. It was at once disclaimed and confided in, forbidden, and employed. Councils and courts consigned its professors to flames temporal and eternal, yet nevertheless "sought to them" on all occasions momentous or trivial. All the thunderbolts of law, ecclesiastical and civil, had been let loose against

them; and those who fulminated them with the utmost fury admitted similar impostors to their confidence, sheltered them in their castles, and entrusted them with secrets big with all their hopes of the present, or all their fears of the future world.

Thus the wretched beings we have alluded to, alternately persecuted and worshipped, tortured or rewarded, passing from the closet of the prince or prelate to the dungeon or the stake and faggot, caught at their precarious existence with a convulsive grasp, and dealt about their spells, charms, and promises, in the vaults of a castle one night, for vast reward, at the risk of perchance blazing in its court on the following day.

These observations were perhaps necessary to introduce the reader to the scene that was now acting in the vaults of the castle of Courtenaye, and to the beings who were the performers in it.

The vault to which the Lord of Courtenaye led his guests by many steps of stone was of vast extent — arch beyond arch, solid, low,

and strongly built of stone, seemed intended to lead to recesses of interminable darkness. There was a kind of compartment where four low arches of stone rose from the paved floor; the roof was in that place vaulted above; and by the sport or spleen of the architect, or perchance by order of the founder, the arches were springing from corbels hewed into the faces of demons, their hideousness magnified by their being strongly hewn out in stone, and presenting features "grotesque and grim" beyond the dream of the sufferer under the nightmare to paint or to imagine.

Beneath the midmost arch of this vault sat a form, clothed in rags, applying fuel to a caldron that was slow in seething. She drew from her withered bosom fragments of charmed wood, and placed them slowly and carefully under the caldron — still it boiled not. The hag, in the inveteracy of her nature, cursed the inanimate materials, and then sat rocking beside the embers, when two other forms appeared through the arches of the vault. They were both women far advanced in years,

yet still possessing marked muscular strength of frame, inveterate malignity of aspect, but something of decision of character in their expression that had its effect alike on the aged and the young.

“And what hast thou done?” said the elder of the twain; “has the caldron seethed?”

“Six hours have I drudged here,” growled the hag, “till my limbs are numbed, and mine eyes are bleared, and thou seest my toil is bootless yet.”

“I bring that which will aid it,” said the other, crouching beside her, and displaying her lap full of withered herbs: “here be marmartin and mandragora, pannax and hemlock; and that herb,” she said, twisting it within her bony fingers, “which frustrates all the hopes of love; and that also which makes those love to madness who hated before to death.

“And what is that,” said her companion, “to what I bring? Here be nightshade, slips of yew, (churchyard yew, mark that!) and cypress, and wolfsbane, and,” with a pause of horrid delight, “a branch of sycamore that

grew from a parricide's grave ; and this weed, whose name I trow not, but it grew fresh and fair on the grave of one whose crime woman's tongue cannot utter — the better for our purpose."

" Pour them into the caldron, and cause the fire to glow," said the crone, who had tarried for them.

" I will pour in mine first," said one of them, advancing to the caldron.

" *Thou !*" cried the other, interposing ; " thou hag and witch from thy birth — thou to mingle thy paltry ingredients before *me* — thou that never gatheredst herbs but from a common."

" And where hast thou gathered thine, thou wrinkled succuba !" answered her compeer, " that thou givest me terms so foul ?"

" From the church-yard—from the vault—from the ruins where murder hath been," rejoined the other beldam :—" have I not been where thou darest not be — where wolves were tearing the dead from the graves ? — have I not grappled with them, and wrenched the

bones from their jaws?—where the bat whizzed past me, watched I not till I caught him by his leathern wing?—where the batted toad croaked from his hole, whose fingers tore him out?”

“Thou liest,” cried her antagonist; “thou never knewest what it was to lame or dry up cattle, or to spoil harvest, in thy long and worthless lifetime.”

“I have made,” said the other, in the miserable emulation of wickedness, “I have made more wed-beds fruitless than thou couldst for thy art, were thy master at thy back.”

“Hag and fiend!” exclaimed the former, darting on her with the springs and fangs of a wild cat, and grasping her by the throat.

“Forbear!—forbear!” said she who had first sat beside the caldron; and rising, with difficulty she tore them asunder.

They stood panting, ghastly, and menacing, at the opposite sides of the caldron; while she exclaimed, “Are you mad?—are not famine and faggot enough here, but ye will kindle the eternal fire for yourselves before the time—

see how bright and blue the flame arises!" — and whether from the ingredients supplied, or from some other circumstance operating on the ignition, the flame burst forth so darkly blue as to give the countenances of the hags who cowered round it a hue beyond all human paleness — a hue preternatural and even diabolical.

The signal operated punctually on their associations. — "Haste and feed the flame," said the twain in a breath: "an' it had not blazed so brightly, *she* whom we tarry for had rated us like dogs."

"I marvel what gave her tongue such license," rejoined the other.

"I marvel more what gave it such power," said the first; "for I have felt it thrill through blood and marrow; it is a sound I hate to hear, yet dare not disobey."

"Wo to us since the hour we knew her!" said the other, and they suddenly exchanged their mutual hostility for a mutual whine of condolence. "Wo to us since that hour! — she rules us as a lord would his serfs — it was

better times when the noblest and the fairest of the land came to our hovels with hands full of agnuses and bezants."

"And so it was," said the other, busily feeding the flame the while, and nodding a ghastly acquiescence.

"Ay, thou rememberest," continued the hag, "and so do I—there came the lady wrapped in her handmaid's veil to ask tidings of her lover—I knew her by her tripping tread and mincing voice. Ay, and the lord hid in the guise of his meanest serf, to ask his fate in some distant battle—crusades they called them, then fought against Pagans far away—crusades they call them still, though they now slay only their own countrymen. I knew *him* too by his proud tone and lofty tread. Gold, gold," she cried, "hath crossed this withered hand—the mother hath left me her last kid to tell the fate of her son gone to battle, and I devoured it, while I knew her stripling lay lifeless ere its limbs were seethed; and the abbot, muffled above his tonsure, hath left me the value of his ring and crosier to

foretell the fate of the mitred bishop, in whose stall he was fain to sit; and both have been cold in the earth, while my old blood was warmed by the wine that I purchased with the gift, to quaff healths that would have made their bones burst through cerement and sepulchre to hear!"

"Ay, those were the times that we have seen," answered the coadjutor, plying her task; "and now—and now, we are sent to gather weeds in a churchyard at *her* command. I tremble to speak of her when I know she is leagues distant; yet do I hate her deadly—deadly! Would," added she, thrusting a bundle of weeds under the caldron, "would that this were the brand to light her stake!"

"Would that it were," said a low, but deep-toned voice; and she of whom they had been speaking stood suddenly among them—"would that it were! But the brand that blazes for me will never be lit by thy hand." And without further notice of what she must have overheard, she continued, "To your task, to your task! those are gathering around ye who

may rend you piecemeal for your delay!" The wretched assistants crouched around the caldron.

Fresh fuel was added—the flame blazed bright and blue, sending a fitting light round the ribbed arches, and the inferior agents renewed their toil, and plied their task in silence. Meanwhile, their chief, who was no other than she who had rowed Paladour over the lake, and assisted at the secret councils of the Lord of Courtenaye, began to prepare herself slowly and, as it seemed, carelessly, for the fearful scene she was about to preside at; she threw off her large mantle, gave some herbs to one of the attendants, and a flask of medicated oil to another; and then drawing some other ingredients from her bosom, which she examined without showing to her associates, said, "These will avail—a few nights more of toil and of suffering—of darkness and delusion—and then——feed ye the flame," she added aloud,—“and quickly and fiercely,—for I hear the sound of steps that I must meet, and of voices that I must speak with.” And

as she spoke, she placed a small triangular piece of black marble on the block of stone, and bade her assistants retire for a space. The hags arose from their crouching posture, muttering, more from inveterate habits of discontent and malignity than from any purpose or power of resistance. "Obey me!—begone!" said the mistress of the spell—"I hear steps approaching." Steps approached—the iron door, low, narrow, and strongly barred, slowly admitted the visitors,—“and welcome,” she said, displaying all the height and grandeur of a form naturally majestic, and now elevated by preternatural excitement, and the power of concentrated passions, to a kind of fiend-like grandeur,—“Welcome,” to De Monfort, “thou glorious and gilded butcher—whom men have girt in iron, and called a noble and a knight: and welcome thou (to the Lord of Courtenaye) who hadst always the heart to slay, but never the hand to strike the blow:—and welcome thou (to Paladour), thou *predoomed* murderer—the deed that is to be, must be done—avert not thy head, and

delay not thy step; but nerve thy hand and harden thy heart—for so it must be: but come not thou!” she shrieked, in more exalted tones, as the Bishop of Toulouse entered—“come not thou, lest the vault should split over thy head and mine,—never, never must we meet, till we meet at last on the verge of the lake of fire, and to its lowest bottom will I sink with a smile, if I may but see thee first weltering on its billows.”

The visitors, somewhat appalled at the language and gesture with which they were encountered, paused at the threshold, with the exception of the Bishop of Toulouse, and some powerful associations seemed to be awakened; as he fixed his eyes on the wretched female, who, from being almost convulsed, was now speechless from deep and terrible emotion.

“Heed her not,” whispered the Lord of Courtenaye to the rest, (dreading the disappointment of the purpose he had planned).—“heed her not—she talks wildly, poor distracted soul! specially at the sight of

strangers ; but when her frenzy hath past away — as in brief space it will — she will become communicative and tractable as one of your jongleurs that sing at the gate, or sport in the hall, and predict successful chase to the lord, and noble wooers to the lady of the castle, faster than they know how to tell their beads.”

It seemed as if he spoke truth, — the flash departed from the eye — the excitement and dilation from the figure of the object he pointed to — her very garments seemed to sink and subside into quieter folds, — her eyes lost all light, her features all colour, her form all expression, character, and power.

“ I said it would be so,” whispered the Lord of Courtenaye. — “ Now mark her, — now the fit is o’erpast, — mark what will follow.”

The change did not seem more to the taste of the visitors, as the vision, for such she now appeared to be, with pale aspect, extended arm, and lips unclosed, waved them slowly and silently into the interior of the vault. They paused — but their character for cou-

rage was at stake — and they followed, all internally uttering vows, or searching their memory for counter-spells, but Paladour. As they followed, the blue flame that glowed beneath the caldron, and gleamed on the arches of the vault, was extinguished; a thick smoke, or rather vapour, for it had no repulsive smell or stifling effect, formed their atmosphere — they felt for each other's hands in the darkness; and however divided in passions, interests, and habits, they were discovered to be thus linked together hand in hand, (all damp and cold,) when the triangular block of marble began slowly to effuse a pale and sulphurous light. As the light developed surrounding objects, it was seen that the bishop of Toulouse still stood alone, strongly fixing his eyes on the female, who now was seen, pale, calm, and resolved, beside her fearful preparations.

* * * * *

De Verac and Semonville had walked silently for an hour up and down; at length the latter turned abruptly on his companion,

—“A thought—a sudden thought hath struck me deeply,” said he.

“That I should change my lilac scarf for one of crimson,” said De Verac, stopping.

“I thought of no such matter,” said Semonville, doggedly.

“And of what else couldst thou be thinking?” said he of the scarf.

“Not of thy complexion, I promise thee,—but whether we should be sworn brothers or foes——”

“Foes!—wherefore should we be foes?”

“Nay, I know not, nor do I much care. I had as lieve be foe as friend with any man—I care not whom—such is my humour. I see how matters fare in this castle, whither I was sent, chiefly at my grandame’s instance, to woo the Lady Isabelle. This Sir Paladour bears down all before him. He hath foiled De Monfort in the lists; he makes the Lord of Courtenaye tremble at his board-end, if he but glance at him. I have seen it.”

And here Verac was astonished at the

acuteness which fools often display in the observation of circumstances and manners. He recollected the Lord of Courtenaye had more than once shown terror and aversion at the sight of Paladour, and he wondered at his not having first discovered and observed it. — As he stood silent —

“Thou art more busied,” said the blunt De Semonville, “twisting the scarf into folds than in listening to my words, — yet I tell thee the foldings of thy scarf were merely scorned in the tourney.”

“Scorned!” repeated De Verac instantly, roused by a reflection on his attire.

“Yea; and I tell thee, moreover, as thou rodest into the lists, the ladies said ——”

“Said what? — What could they say? — My plumage was foreign, and of a most delicate fancy.”

Fool as he was, Semonville felt he was now master of the key to which alone Verac's feelings uttered harmony or discord, and he pursued his advantage.

“Dame Marguerite — I answer not for

her taste — Dame Marguerite likened your helmet to her fan; a handle of silver, and a forest of feathers waving above and around.”

“ Malicious hag, she lied! The plumage was fair, curious, and well-assorted.”

“ Ay, and so were thine hose the night before, when thou wert dancing, and yet men say there might be better legs than thine.”

“ I defy them,” said Verac, drawing up his hose, and showing a taper and well-formed limb. “ I defy them! I care not what they say of my form and feature — let them call me uncomely — any thing — but let them not dispraise my scarf and attire.”

“ Do I not point out the way to work thy will, and meet thy wish?” said Semonville.

“ The Lady Isabelle scorns us both; let us be brothers in arms for mere hatred, and sworn friends for mortal malice, — for methinks I would like to defeat that Paladour of his love.”

“ Thou sayest well, and I accept thy pledge,” said De Verac, after pausing a moment, and then he grasped eagerly the proffered hand of De Verac.

At that moment a wild and horrid cry, the fierce yell of masculine agony, in its most horrid extremity, made Verac relax his grasp.

“ The work of hell is going on below,” he cried, in the horror of sudden conviction : then, with an illapse of gallant feeling, which was indeed natural to him, “ Could brand or lance aid them, I would hack them to splinters on the dungeon walls, wherein they have enclosed themselves ; but no mortal help may avail them *now*.”

“ An I had my grandmother’s spells,” muttered Semonville, “ I would no more heed fiends well-enclosed in a vault, (where I might deal with them roundly, provided they never passed their bounds,) than I would a community of the heretics, whom I would indeed give their choice of death by flame or sword, or as they might wish—for I always seek to be courteous in such matters—but in truth I will confess to thee, that mine hair stands almost upright. And I have no weapons,” he added, half drawing his dagger,

“ for such enemy as they are dealing with now.” And he was hastening from the hall.

“ It were pity and shame to leave them in such strait,” said Verac ; his natural courage struggling with his superstitious feelings. Another horrid and indescribable sound bursting on his ears, made him catch Semonville’s arms for support.

“ It were worse,” said Semonville, pushing him out, “ to have this huge hall crumble over our heads ; — mine, I know, could never sustain the weight, however thicker skulls might fare. If this gear hold in the Castle of Courtenaye, I would sooner couch in my grandmother’s closet, which all know to be haunted, than in the chamber of the Lady Isabelle. If one must needs be haunted, it were better by the ghosts of one’s own family than by those of strangers. What, the devil, dalliest thou for?”

“ I doubt I have left a certain favour behind me,” said Verac, lingering ; “ it was a knot, *couleur-de-rose*, which I always bore on

the sleeve of my purple tunic, since a fair hand ——”

“Tarry an thou wilt,” said Semonville, hurrying away himself; “perchance, if thou delayest, no fair hand, but a fiery fang, will fasten on thee another kind of favour.”

“The saints forbid!” cried Verac, darting through the passage.

“Amen, Amen!” quoth Semonville, who was first in the flight.

“Rapidly as they sought and gained their apartments, the fearful sounds they had heard seemed to pursue them. They paused — listened — the sounds ceased on a sudden — they plunged into their beds, and drawing their silken quilts high above their heads, muttered their night-spells earnestly under the quivering coverlet.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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THE ALBIGENSES.

CHAPTER I.

Oh, ransom, ransom, do not hide mine eyes.

SHAKESPEARE.

WE have told in a preceding chapter, if the reader should happen to remember it, that Sir Amirald on hearing the cries of a female hastened to her rescue. The knight and his steed were indeed wearied wandering among the hills without shelter or food, when they appeared suddenly stirred at the summons, as if the high impulses of chivalry operated simultaneously on both, the knight applying his spurs, and the steed quickening his pace at the signal, exhaustion and weariness forgotten at the appeal.

To understand the cause of the knight's career, which he pursued at full gallop among the rocky defiles at the risk of his life, we must retrograde a few steps, and return to the scene that passed in the cave of the Albigeois on the night we have before described. Genevieve had sat supporting her grandfather's head on her knees, after carefully spreading under his chilled limbs her mantle of woollen cloth, and gazed on a fissure of the cavern through which the moonlight streamed, and felt as she gazed the deep wish to solemnize her feelings, and abstract them if possible from anxious and troubled views of her earthly destination—the solicitudes for that “frail and feverish being,” which though forced on her by necessity, her pure heart felt it like a crime to dwell on in her hours of lonely reflection.

The preceding scene had touched her mild but acute perceptions deeply. “And here,” she said to herself, “even here, where a number of persecuted beings are assembled

together to worship God,—even here dissension and discord are reigning; and those who are weak against the strong are making themselves weaker by division amongst themselves!”

She mused, then turning to that holy beam which glowed brightly on fragment and fissure, and tinted even the small crags and airy foliage with a silvery and visionary light, she murmured, “Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest!”—“Genevieve, Genevieve,” whispered a voice at this moment, low but audible. She listened, but perceived not from whence it came. The sound was repeated, and a figure like that she had first seen passed before the aperture, dimming the moonlight as it crossed its beams, and a voice again called on the name of Genevieve. She remembered the ghastly figure which had visibly crossed the entrance of the cavern that disastrous night, and she heard the voice again whisper, “Genevieve.” She listened

with a feeling that wandered between vision and reality; her imagination took part with her senses, enfeebled by famine and fatigue—she saw all objects falsely, and exaggerated as through a mist: she half believed it might be an intimation from no earthly voice, and gently laying the head of the pastor on her folded mantle, and rising with cramped and shivering limbs, she tried to gain the entrance of the cavern.

It was a venturous progress among those who slept, and whom she feared to awake, more than to disobey the impulse under which she advanced. Her gentle steps trod among men sunk in sullen but still watchful slumber, who murmured the war-word in their dreams, and who at the lightest sound that reached their sleeping senses would have started to arms or to prayer: she trod still more gently, her fairy foot scarce touching earth, when she approached where mothers lay with their infants—*them* she most feared to disturb. Her light step, her slender form,

her quiet solicitude, won her way for her unnoticed and unmolested ; she reached the entrance of the cavern, and a human figure covered with blood stood there to greet her. She shrunk back for a moment, then clasping her hands over her eyes, stood to listen with that deep habitual feeling of self-possession which early misfortune had taught her.

“ You know me not, then,” said the figure bathed in blood, “ you know me not.” It was the voice of Amand, the young Albigeois, who had always been deemed timid even to cowardice, who had never wielded a club, or joined the sorties of the young peasants in the course of his life before. Mild, indolent, and contemplative, he had attended with reverence the assemblies of the Albigeois, and listened with profound attention to the exhortations of the Barbes ; but neither the devout nor the warlike of the community seemed to consider him worthy of farther notice, than for the former to wonder that one so reverent and attentive had never aspired to give

“the word of exhortation,” and the latter to remark his increasing stature, and marvel that he never wielded “the sword of the Lord against the mighty:”—the men thought of him as nothing, and the women as worse than nothing. “And is it thus I see thee, and none but thee?”—“Thou wouldst, then, have seen other than me?” said Amand, with a peculiar expression; “yet for thy sake am I *thus*. I was deemed a coward—I have proved I am not: behold I am covered with blood!”

“I never thought—” said Genevieve, not knowing what to say; “but to see thee thus covered with blood is horrid to mine eyes: we have wandered, wept, and prayed together—and I know not how this new aspect of thine in war terrifies me. Was it thou I beheld to-night, as thou didst darkly seem to cross the entrance of the cavern?”—He was silent: “And why didst thou disappear on the instant?”

“I shrunk when I beheld thee, Genevieve: I had madly hoped to die in thy sight, but,

when I saw thee, the love of life stirred in me again."

"But why art thou here so late, and wherefore here at all?" said Genevieve. "Thy wounds need tending, and thou hast nought of hope or comfort to tell."—"If my wounds lack tendance, I ask thee not to be my leech," said Amand impatiently: "if I have nought of hope or comfort to tell, I have that to tell which is of import to thee—if I have breath to utter it. Thy beauty, Genevieve——"

"Mine!" exclaimed the startled girl, shrinking as from the charge of crime, "mine! and is this the moment thou hast chosen for topic so light and vain?"

"Farewell, farewell," said Amand, rushing from her; "thou art displeased with me; but I shall perish to-morrow, and let that be remembered as a palliation, if my words have offended thee this night."

"Nay stay, Amand, stay, I pray thee," said the trembling girl, "and tell me, I

charge thee by our common creed, if I have aught to dread, exceeding the trials my people are exposed to."

"Thou wishest then to hear of the fame of thy beauty, while thou affectest to shrink from its mention," said Amand, with an expression which was but too well suited to his harsh but marked and expressive features: "then hear. When we encountered with those children of the Anakim, for such they seemed in stature, force, and power—with the sons of Belial, for such they are, luxurious and loose—when they cut us down like the grass of the field, and trampled on us as the peasant treads on the weeds of his path—what was the war-cry of one?—'Saint Genevieve of the Albigeois!'—Oh, Genevieve, we have been children together—we have been nurtured in the same faith, and trod the mountain, and breathed the breeze, and sung and prayed, and smiled and wept together—oh, pledge me then thy faith, Genevieve, that (if it so should chance)

the fame and praise of thy fair beauty, the courtly talk of goodly and gallant knights, and, above all, the profane and flattering gallantry of him men call the Abbot of Normoutier, will not, will not, turn thine heart, or thy faith, or thy brain."

"Is thy brain turned," said the maiden, "that thou askest such question? What know I of thy knights and thine abbot? and which of those sons of pride would deign a glance to the peasant maiden?"

"Oh, Genevieve!" said the youth, with agonizing earnestness, "thou knowest not what thou sayest: they might not descend to persuade; but (his voice became not louder, but more intense and emphatic in its tones) thy youth, thy innocence, thy eloquence, heaven-taught, and uttered in tones that breathe of Heaven, would vainly plead against that enemy thou ever bearest about thee."

"Is it mine evil heart of unbelief?" said Genevieve. "What other enemy have I?"

“I speak of thy beauty,” said Amand : “that is thine enemy—thy sole, thy worst ; for which of the daughters of men can vie with thee in beauty, and who would be a more acceptable prize and prey to the ruthless knights and licentious churchmen who call themselves Crusaders?”

The unhappy girl stood confounded at this intimation of a danger, to which her unconsciousness of or indifference to her own exterior, combined perhaps with the hourly exigencies of a life of peril and suffering, had hitherto rendered her insensible. She stood silent for some time ; and then raising her eyes, fixed them on Amand with an expression of appeal the most piteous and piercing.

“Yes,” said her companion, answering her looks, “I came to shew thee at once thy danger and thy safety :—there is a retreat.—”

He was much agitated, and his voice became inarticulate.

“But wherefore,” said Genevieve, gazing timidly around her on scenery she beheld for

the first time—"wherefore hast thou led me so far from the cave?"

"It was lest we might disturb the sleepers," said Amand.

"I will go no farther," answered she: "speak what thou hast to tell here, or rather let me return to my retreat and hear it there."

"Thy father lies stretched near the entrance, and thou knowest the lightest whisper were enough to break his slumbers," replied Amand.

Genevieve paused, prepared to listen, but resolved not to advance; and he described in a confused manner a retreat among the hills that surrounded them, known only to himself, and tenanted by an Albigeois family, who lived in unmolested tranquillity, practising their worship unsuspected, amid solitudes unviolated by the cruelty, unknown even by the jealousy, of persecution. "And thither I will bear thee ere dawn," he continued, speaking rapidly; "and let priest, or peer, or

fiend in league with them, trace thee if he can."

There was something pictorial, hollow, and fallacious in the style of his description that had more than once struck Genevieve in the course of it, rapidly as it was delivered. She suppressed her doubt, however; but hastened to terminate their conference.

"Thine offer is vain," she said: "I accept of no retreat that does not also shelter my father;" and she turned towards the cavern.

"Thou shalt not choose!" said Amand, fiercely: "thinkest thou I came hither to talk? In the depths of the wild woods, in the caves of the mountains, in the cliffs of the rocks, would I rather see thee stretched at my side and perishing with famine, than behold thee the paramour of a glorious Crusader. Amid the mountains thou wast born, and amid the mountains, please Heaven! thou shalt perish, though such is not thy wish." As he spake, he had raised her in his arms and carried her to some distance.

Genevieve struggled gently for a time, scarce believing such violence was intended her; at length she made her strongest effort, and attempted, but vainly, to extricate herself.

“Why didst thou not suffer me to depart?” cried Amand, overcoming her struggles: “why didst thou not suffer me to flee, when I would have done so? My conscience smote me—I fled; but thy voice recalled me, and thou must abide the result of thine own wild will.”

Genevieve struggled more vehemently, and with increased terror; but her strength was no match for that of Amand, who, though timid and feeble, displayed on this occasion a force with which female strength contended in vain. He had borne her up a rocky steep, and, scarce drawing breath, was preparing to ascend another, when from behind a projecting angle of the rocky path two men suddenly started forth, part of their armed figures gleaming in the setting

moonlight, and part shrouded by their dark houplands. Without speaking a word, they struck Amand to the earth; and then seizing on Genevieve, they enfolded her in one of their long dark cloaks, and attempted to stifle her cries by drawing it closely round her while they bore her on between them. There was no need for the attempt—her terror suppressed all outcry; and it was not till they had borne her to some distance, that she collected the feeble force of her suppressed voice to implore for mercy. “Mercy!” said one of the captors; “what mercy deservest thou, who canst not pay a liard for thy ransom, and has cost us more toil than if we were to bear a nun from a cloister?” —“Befall what may,” said the other, “she will be no unacceptable prize to one of the Crusaders who are feasting at the Castle of Courtenaye.”

At these words Genevieve uttered a shriek so loudly that her companions, without mercy or hesitation, threatened to stifle

it by the most ruthless means if she dared to utter it again.

The cry, however, had reached other ears. As Genevieve was hurried on, half-stifled, half-dead with terror, she heard distinctly a voice (though its feminine tones seemed to give but little hope of defence) exclaim, "Hold, caitiffs! miscreants! whither are ye bearing that burthen between ye?"—"It is a corse we are bearing to be interred, the due rites being first said over it by the Abbot of Normoutier," quoth one of the bearers.—"It is a prede taken from the heretics, which we want the blessing of some holy man to consecrate to the use of Holy Church," said the other: and as they spoke both in the same breath, and in the same moment, the stranger, whoever he was, had no hesitation in believing both accounts false.

"Mercy! for the love of Heaven," exclaimed Genevieve, in a struggling and stifled voice, which, faint as it was, seemed to thrill

through the ears of her champion by the answer he made on the instant. "Is it a corse ye bear? set it down on the spot, or, by Mary's might, that abbot ye name will have to sing a mass over *your* hilding corses, instead of that ye pretend to bear."

The men returned no answer; but the next moment Genevieve (whom her captors had flung on the ground) heard blows dealt about so heavily and heartily, that she scarce could believe they were bestowed by an arm that appertained to one whose voice was so soft and feminine. Those blows, so lustily dealt, decided the point in less than two minutes; but ere those had elapsed, Genevieve, though stunned by the shock and fall, had disentangled herself from the folds of the houpland, and tried to gaze around; and by the light of the stars (more vivid than moonlight in other regions,) she beheld the slender figure of a youth contending, and not in vain, with two muscular ruffians. He was armed, and his antagonists soon betook them-

selves to flight, exclaiming it was sooth that the devil always helped his friends, nor could they hope better meed for dealing with a heretic Albigeoise.

Genevieve rose from the earth, on which she had sunk in gratitude, and stood before her young preserver without the power of speech. He had, indeed, saved her from the outrage of ruffians ; but she knew the habits of that lawless age too well to deem her dangerless in the hands of a youthful knight, generous and valiant as he had proved himself in her cause. Through her instinctive sense of her danger, quickened by the hints of Amand, as well as by her late peril, she folded her mantle about her, so as to shroud both her face and person, and stood trembling in irresolute and ungracious silence.

Her champion seemed as embarrassed as herself ; he was fatigued by the struggle, and he mused how he might address a shape so silent, and apparently unconscious of the service he had just rendered her.

“Is it indeed a corse that I have rescued?” said he, at length approaching her; and his young and gentle tones inspiring her with confidence, she ventured to answer, “It is one who would ere this have wished she were a corse, were it not for thy valour, sir knight.”

“Fair saint,” said the youth, addressing her in the strain of the age---“fair saint, draw the curtain of thy shrine, that I may see and worship.”

“Your devotion, sir knight, would be ill bestowed,” said Genevieve, timidly.

“By the favour of our Lady, I have saved thee from some danger,” said the youth; “and may I not be guerdoned by a glimpse of thy fair form, a glance of thine eye, a touch of thine hand, or perchance of thy red lip, in requital?”

Genevieve felt her danger equal at least to her obligation; but she took her resolution in a moment.

“Yes, with all, sir knight,” she answered,

unfolding her mantle ; “ and with more than all—for here are not only eye, and hand, and lip ; but fame and honour, body’s safety, and soul’s price, entrusted to thee. I am a peasant maiden, an Albigeoise : the child of those against whom thy faith and thine arms are pointed alike ; for well I guess thou art a Crusader. I am in thy power ; but feel, therefore, that as thou art noble, I am safe.”

There was a trembling majesty in her form and accents as she spake, an appeal without power, a fear that commanded, that made her young preserver feel all that can melt and agitate a youthful heart, whose chords for the first time vibrate to the delicious touch of a claim for pity and protection. Yet, comparing her voice and manner with the purport of her words, the young Crusader could scarce conquer his incredulity. “ And is this the daughter of an heretic and peasant ? ” he said ; “ yet her tones have no smatch of her birth, nor do her reasons lack

ought of what clear and noble spirits might utter in hap like hers :—Damsel,” he added, “ thou art safe with me; he who perilled life for thy safety would not lightly endanger that which thou nobly valuest more than life, and which he who has saved it prizes above his own.” And this was spoken with the eloquent blush and earnest grace of truth; so that Genevieve, sinking with fatigue and agitated feelings, no longer declined the support of the arm which he tendered with as high courtesy as ever he had to titled beauty. “ Thou art trembling, damsel,” said Amiral, with anxious gentleness.—“ I tremble, but my fears are not for myself,” answered the maiden.—“ Thou art near one of the wretched retreats of my persecuted people, and should they find thee here——” “ Would they not be grateful for thy safety at least?” said the knight.—“ I cannot answer for their gratitude; but I can well answer for thy danger,” said the maiden.—“ Leave me, I pray thee: thy noble life is perilled while thou tarryest;

leave me to wander back alone." "Not at the peril of a thousand lives, were they mine," cried Amirald, as he marked the faltering step and sinking voice of Genevieve; and lifting her on his steed, he led her gently on in the direction her parting steps had indicated.

In the effort, the wounds, till then unfelt, that he had received in his conflict with the ruffians, burst forth, and the blood gushed through his armour.

"I will perish, I will perish on this spot," cried Genevieve, "or I will wander back as I may, ere I witness such a sight again. Oh that I might," she cried, the habitual reverence for rank overcoming her other feelings, as one whose community was at war with the established state of society—"Oh that I might with mine own hands heal those wounds, and wash them with my tears, and tend them by the hour, while stooping frame and bended knee, care and prayer, watched over the work. Oh that I

were but worthy to be thy handmaid, noble knight !”

Touched more deeply by the mellow and melting tenderness of the peasant maiden’s voice, than by his own sense of actual pain, the young knight once more attempted to raise her in his arms. Genevieve resisted, but in vain, and was at length compelled to submit to accept his assistance. While Amiral sustained her slender weight, and while she endured to be so sustained, each murmured to themselves—Amiral perhaps audibly, “ Is there, then, such noble and gentle affection in an Albigeoise, such lofty thought, combined with language so gentle ?”—and Genevieve internally, “ and is there such honour in a Crusader, that he risks life for the safety of a despised daughter of my people ?”

They had not advanced far, when a certain whistle was heard, accompanied by watch-words, or rather signals, to which the ears of Genevieve were well accustomed. “ Depart,” cried Genevieve eagerly; “ I hear

the feet of my people approaching—they are, perchance, in quest of me.”—“I will depart,” said Amirald, bending his proud knee to the earth, while he kissed the hand of his lovely burthen. “I will depart, maiden, though I know not where this night to couch my head; but rather would I deal with a host of ruffians like those who seized thee, than touch a hair of the head of thy people who seek thee and who love thee. Maiden, under no Crusader’s corslet beats an heart so full of pity towards an heretic as mine to thee. Oh that thou wert a daughter of the true Church! what then would be lacking to thy glorious qualities and gentle haviour?” He parted:—“Oh,” cried Genevieve, “that thou wert an Albigeois—but for their bonds!”

The restless agony of Pierre, who had felt his daughter’s absence on awaking from his broken slumber, had caused some of them to set forth at whatever risk in pursuit of her. By them she was found, and the joy of meeting forbade all enquiry with regard to her

short absence; or, perhaps, the habits of the Albigeois, accustomed to strong vicissitudes, anticipated all enquiries by the consciousness that another might occur before the cause of the preceding one could be explained.

CHAPTER II.

Here Presbytery with Episcopacy
Holds such a fight it would amaze you,
Here free-will holds a fierce dispute
With reprobation absolute.

ANONYMOUS.

THE Crusaders hourly now expected the return of the Monk of Montcalm with the answer of the Albigeois, and the bishop proudly anticipated another triumph of that eloquence which had hitherto been deemed irresistible;—already he saw in perspective the reputation of St. Dominic himself, the first preacher and inquisitor, shrinking into insignificance, and the memory of the ill-fated Chateanneuf compromised in the glory of that powerful appeal that was to convert the Albigeois to the Catholic creed, and place a new gem in his expected tiara.

It was certainly a rare and perilous policy on the part of the Church of Rome, to *commit* men who, however individually powerful in intellect, and possessed of all the learning of that age, relied for the effect of their sermons rather on *prescription*, than on the interest of novelty, the cogency of argument, or, perhaps, the omnipotence of truth—with men who drew their credentials from Scripture, and urged them with an energy, feeling, and conviction, “as having authority.” The preachers of the former class (now for the first time urged to exertion in that important department) seemed to offer to their thirsty hearers stinted draughts from a medicated cup; the latter pointed with the air and voice of inspiration to the “*integros fontes*,” they shouted aloud, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.”

Such, however, had been the mode adopted (and perhaps no better presented itself then) on the first disastrous mission of Pierre de Chateauneuf, partly from the pride of power,

which would not be outdone in the novel mode of competition adopted by the antagonist, and partly from the consciousness of superior intellectual attainment (then conceived to be the exclusive property of the ecclesiastics, though in truth it was but thinly and inadequately diffused among their vast body).

But the Church of Rome, then in the plenitude of her power, could not, or would not, admit the conviction, that the supremacy of her establishment rooted, even at that remote period, for ages, and supported, aided, and embellished by all that was then powerful in human eloquence, profound in human learning, exciting in human interests, and touching in human passions, could fail before the preaching of a few illiterate peasants, who drew their theology from a forbidden book, and their inspiration from Nature and from heaven; that the glorious galley—the “gallant ship,” which had weathered a thousand storms and assaults, was

to strike sail to a carvel, when she was now safe and proud in harbour.

The experiment, however, had failed, and the missionary Chateauneuf had been the victim. But the court of Rome had at present another object :—the grasping ambition of the Bishop of Toulouse, whose heart, eye, and almost hand were already on the tiara, had not escaped their notice. His intrigues with the various sovereigns of Europe they had been apprised of, by the emissaries they employed at their courts; moreover, his correspondence with the Emperor of Germany, and the Kings of Arragon and England, had been intercepted, and though the cypher in which they were written baffled all the ingenuity of the Vatican, with that of its most expert secretaries, still his peculiar hand was recognized; and the circumstance of such a correspondence existing was enough to awaken suspicions and apprehensions still more formidable. Finally, his putting himself at the head of the Crusaders, next to

Count Simon de Montfort, seemed, in fact, to be putting himself in place of the Pope himself in France, while the *well-good* understanding, as it was termed in the language of that age, between him and the boisterous and brutal De Montfort, was considered as a kind of sinister omen, and strengthened the supposition that he might avail himself of his influence over his rude coadjutor to win his own secret way, and work his own powerful will.

It was, therefore, at this juncture that the court of Rome availed itself of its usual temporizing policy, and through the legate, who stood responsible for all measures, employed as its commissioned mediator the Monk of Montcalm, whose well-accredited sanctity of character and purity of life stood between the rotten politics of the Vatican, and the vigorous and vital spirit that animated the community of the Albigeois—like the priest of old between the living and the dead—to negotiate between the contending parties. To the infinite dis-

appointment of the Pope and the conclave, they found they had selected a man the last on earth to be trusted with such a mission. They thought they had secured every point; the known sanctity of his character rendered him a most respectable agent; the humility of his station, and his spiritual-mindedness made him also an unsuspected object to the Bishop of Toulouse, who knew as well as any cardinal in the conclave, that the Monk of Montcalm would not resign his hermitage for the tiara. Thus they imagined that they had provided a powerful antagonist (for the sanctity of the poor monk far outweighed the dignity of the prelate, even in the estimation of the most worldly,) under the guise of one apparently the most feeble and inefficient; and that all their procrastinating policy (meant chiefly to diminish the power and mortify the ambition of the Bishop of Toulouse) might be laid safely on the shoulders of the legate, who, supporting his assumed and constrained part, affected a profound reverence for the sanctified

character and inspired counsels of the Monk of Montcalm.

Thus the whole politics of the ecclesiastical world, (and politics were at that period almost exclusively confined to ecclesiastics,) like an inverted cone, rested on a point, a diminutive and almost invisible part of the mighty mass it sustained; but the wisdom of the Vatican was here completely outreached, even by the very simplicity of the instrument it designed to employ.

The man whom they justly deemed humble, abstracted, and unearthly, was, nevertheless, one who went head and heart straight forward to the truth and the right of whatever cause he was engaged in. Had they employed the most profound diplomatist of the age, who was sworn in secret to confound or counteract their counsels, they could not have fared worse than they did from the instrument employed. An honest upright man is the worst implement that ever designing and corrupt hands meddled with, to work their foul and secret purpose.

The Monk of Montcalm was a strict and conscientious Catholic, but he had a Christian feeling for the sufferings of the Albigeois; and "innocent of the knowledge" that he was played off as a *pis aller* in the desperate game that was fighting between the Vatican and the Bishop of Toulouse, he travelled from Rome to the Castle of Courtenaye, and from thence to the neighbouring retreat of the Albigeois, from which, as we have related, he was now returning; grieved alike by the pride of one party and the obstinacy of the other, but rejoiced that he had at least effected one peaceful meeting between them. Thus, his integrity of purpose, benevolence of heart, and true heavenly-mindedness, (which was all counted by the Vatican as weakness that would perplex and protract the negotiation *ad libitum Papæ*,) instead of having the effect they had hoped from his imputed ignorance and diplomatic inefficiency, produced exactly the contrary effect of making the adverse parties under-

stand the terms on which they stood; and of effecting, by indefatigable activity and immaculate veracity, the arrangement of a meeting between the Crusaders and the Albigensis—a meeting within a few hours, which the council at Rome hoped might have been delayed for as many months.—And thus the Monk of Montcalm proved all unconsciously the triumph of plain strong sense, profound religious feeling, and fervent intense philanthropy, over all the complicated counsels, jarring interests, and fiercely opposed passions of Rome and of those she employed, and dreaded and distrusted most when she found their agency most necessary.

The Monk of Montcalm was expected to return on the day after the combat, (the storm of the preceding evening having, probably, delayed his arrival then), for, though advanced in years, he was known to perform his journeys with the punctuality of a foot-post. All that day a cloud hung over the Castle of Courtenaye. The storm

of the preceding night had passed away, but dark vapours still rested on the hills, thick drops of rain beat heavily against the casement, and blasts came roaring down the wide chimney, driving forth the blaze of the wood-fire before it, that shrunk and failed again as it retired. The fierce excitement of the age knew no graduated intervals of quiet and useful occupation, between the extremes of gloomy sloth or perilous extremity. The guests were, therefore, ill-prepared for a day of dull and in-door tranquillity. To add to its dulness, the lady Isabelle (perhaps to shun the sight of De Montfort) was engaged in the devotions she had promised to her patron-saint, if her champion was successful in the lists. During the day the knights and nobles stalked through the vast hall, yawned heavily, played a game at draughts drowsily, glanced at the high windows, which, though they admitted light, excluded all prospect, and, internally cursing the slow and doubtful counsels of the Vatican, made vows for the

speedy return of the Monk of Montcalm. Verac and Semonville, who were the only individuals in the Castle acquainted with the midnight visit of the others to the vault, assumed faces of importance vainly hiding irrepressible curiosity. They winked, nodded, and looked mysteriously at each other; but their curiosity was doomed to be both insatiable and unsated. They threw themselves eagerly in the way of those who, the preceding night, obeyed the summons of the Lord of Courtenaye, or rather their own wild will and dark feelings, and whispered enquiries with all the secrecy of anticipated confidence, but they could only obtain from Sir Paladour a brief, obscure, and agitated, reply. The rest were totally silent. No mode of questioning or hinting, direct or indirect, no circuitous approaches of Verac, or barefaced questions of Semonville, could extort more. The enquirers stood abashed, repelled, and defeated.

The Bishop of Toulouse (whom neither

dare accost) was playing chess with the Count de Montfort, and dictating between the moves to his Latin secretary, who was seated at a small table beside him, a letter to the Pope, (the contents of which he had no fear of his antagonist, or, indeed, any other in the hall understanding.)

Towards noon or somewhat later, as they were about to spread for dinner, the bishop in the same breath cried "Checkmate," though De Montfort was reckoned the most skilful player of the age, dictated a few final lines in Latin to the secretary, concluded the letter with an hieroglyphic, written with his own hand, sealed it with his own proper signet, ordered the messenger, who received it on his knees, to ride for life, and rose to watch for the Monk of Montcalm, whose speed was delayed, as we have said, alike by his persisting to travel on foot, and by the storm of the preceding day. It was on the close of this weary day, that the monk, indeed, arrived at the Castle of

Courtenaye. He bore tidings that the heretics were grateful for the legate's message, and accepted the offer of meeting the Crusaders and hearing the bishop's exhortation, provided the party came unarmed. "Alas!" said the holy man, "Beziers and Carcassonne are still fresh in their memories."—"And so is the martyr Chateauneuf in ours," said the bishop. The tables were now spreading for the feast, and the Crusaders, collecting round them, anticipated joyously the three great epochs of chivalric life—a feast, a procession, and preaching (a novelty then to Catholics)—and perchance, highly as they deemed of the eloquence of the Bishop of Toulouse—a battle after all.

During the tumult of the hall, the monk was about to retire, when the bishop stayed him, after murmuring to himself, "Had I had emissaries among these heretics—had I sounded their *shoals*, for they have no *depths*, I should ere this—but no matter—I will ere long. There be men among them that may

be tempted, there be women that may be melted. I will have those about me who will watch the bait most likely to catch, or the net best twined to entangle;—no, I will watch myself: some bright eye, some commanding feature, some towering stature among their women—that will be rare among peasants—that will not do;—then, some keen visage, eager face, loud tones, and prompt ambition of an unnoted spirit; yea, that were better to deal with. Your peasantry ever abound in those when their wits are whetted on the touchstone of Scripture, as they call it; and their usurped authority giveth them a kind of right of railing against the power they would be fain to share. If I should meet but two such—a woman fair and ambitious, a man sensual, avaricious, or gluttonous, a slave to those appetites they boast of subduing—then were the game as surely in my hand as if I were to encounter my lord De Montfort again at chess. Bishops, castles, and knights, were

vain against me—I would checkmate with my pawns; but we must hold question with this Monk of Montcalm.”

The crowd gave way as the bishop advanced; and it was a striking sight to mark the meeting between the magnificent prelate and the humble monk, who seemed like the embodied representatives of this world and the future.

The pale ascetic moved timidly and slowly amid the splendid and tumultuous group of the Crusaders, (whose demeanour still breathed of war, though they wore the dress of peace,) like an humble fishing-bark amid a fleet of proud and gilded gallies, tacking every moment, as if dreading to be sunk by their movements, or crushed between their sides. Yet such, even in that rude age, was the impression made by sanctity of manners, integrity of purpose, and benevolence of heart, that many a lofty head was bent to sue for his benediction; and many a proud breast, enfolded in silk and silver, panted for the peace

that was enshrined in a heart covered only by the sorry weeds of an eremite.

When the Monk of Montcalm came in presence of the bishop, where he stood in the splendour of his episcopal vestments, surrounded by attendants, and indeed with an air that would have given grandeur to the humblest state, he bowed low as to superior station, but with undazzled eye, and meekly craved his blessing.

“Holy monk, we rather ask your’s,” said the bishop, who never failed on due occasion to give his dignity the grace of condescension.

The eremite stretched forth his withered hand as the bishop bowed his mitred front; and then the conference was about to commence. At the first sentence, “*Dic Latine, quæso, frater reverendissime,*” said the bishop. “*Nequeo, episcopo sanctissime,*” answered the monk with some diffidence. “*Absunt mihi et facundia et facilitas.*” The bishop gave a signal to his attendants, who retired to a respectful distance.

The conference lasted but for a few moments, for what had the speakers in common? The monk told all he knew—the bishop learned all he wished; and the former, whose dim sight was aching with the splendour of lights and gorgeous pageantry, craved permission to withdraw to his shed in the base-court of the Castle, conformably to his vow, never to sleep but under the roof of monastic walls or of his own lonely tenement.

The bishop looked after him for a space, and then triumphantly murmured, (for his greatest triumphs were always internal) — “ So, Rome hath enmeshed herself again in her own web; be it so. And so they thought that this poor ascetic would so perplex and obscure their matters with the heretics, that they might dally and delay at their list, and play King against Champion of the Church, and the Champion against the Bishop of Toulouse, as it suited their cold and temporizing policy; and now they are quitted as they deserve. This dolt-

headed monk hath gone straight-forward in the path of his office ; the controversy is adjusted in a twinkling ; and I, whom they dread (yes, I know they dread me," said the prelate, muttering still lower, and compressing his lips to conceal a proud involuntary smile,) "am, by their bungling politics, the accredited mediator between two parties, of whom it were hard to say which hates me deadliest. By Heaven ! had they intrusted their cause to me, I could have protracted it for twenty years, save that it were too long to wait for the tiara. I would have fought battles with them ; and were they lost, I would have recourse to treaties ; and if *they* were broken, I would have fought battles again. No matter : they have wrought their own decay. To-morrow I must speak with these heretics, and let their mountain-echoes look to it ; for though I envy not the martyrdom of that Chateauneuf, I will not leave a rock that shall not thunder back eloquence louder and more potent than ever

he uttered, and force these heretics that love the mountains to call on them to cover them, but to escape from its sound."

"My lord museth," said one of the attendants, who, like the rest, was standing at a distance.

The sound instantly struck the bishop's ear, whose senses were remarkably acute; and as the Lord of Courtenaye approached with courteous speech to invite him to the banquet, which was now spread, he answered with the collected air of one on whom important business presses:—"My lord, you know that to-morrow it is the Holy Father's will we encounter these heretics, not with weapons, but with words. I have need of many orisons to-night, to pray the Saints to enable me to sustain the burthen the will of our Holy Father hath imposed on these poor shoulders. I crave an interest in your prayers, my good lord, though a layman's—and bid you a fair good rest this night."

"A fair good rest, my holy lord," an-

swered De Courtenaye, mechanically repeating the words, and bowing low to the bishop as he quitted the hall; then turning towards the tables, he muttered; "Proud, dark, and daring hypocrite, *thou* talk of orisons! such rest be to thee as thou wishest me in thy secret heart! Thy dreams will be of that vision displayed to thee in the vault last night; thy pride conceals it, but thy heart believes; and mine must be—no matter what! The feast is spread—the fools are smiling—and I—Oh God—must smile too!"

"So please you, my lord—" said the seneschal, approaching.

"I know what thou wouldst say. I am coming. May not a man smile in his own hall, but thou must watch his mirth? I will break thy wand over thy pate if thou marrest my mirth thus again!—Sit, noble guests! and now, lord abbot, pledge me in this cup of muscadine, and tell me how thou thinkest these heretics will meet the reasons of my lord of Toulouse to-morrow."

The abbot answered the pledge duly. But his thoughts on the event of the following day we are unable to record, save that report says they were somewhat inarticulate, and altogether unintelligible.

CHAPTER III.

Pollio must sure to penitence excite,
For see his band how smooth, his gown how bright ;
.
Proud of the periods levell'd against pride.

DODSLEY'S COLLECTION.

THE next morning, at the close of the month of September 1216, at an early hour, the cavalcade set out from the Castle of Courtenaye. The lord of the castle had taken care that his own appointment should be sufficiently gorgeous ; and to increase its splendour, he required that the lady Isabelle, with her female attendants, should accompany him,—a request with which she complied the more readily, as knowing that every female of rank in the vicinity proposed to join in the procession. The Bishop of Toulouse, his embroidered vestments resplen-

dent with gold and gems arranged so as to represent the cross-keys, the insignia of his rank; his noble steed almost hid beneath his gorgeous caparisons, but evincing by his impatient prancings and curvettings a spirit that the rider gracefully and majestically restrained—his cross-bearer and other attendants, habited as splendidly and imposingly as their profession and station allowed, surrounding or following; the magnificent standard of the Crusaders, blazing aloof in the morning-sun like the banner of a king, waving before him:—the bishop, I say, rode in the van, “in shape and gesture proudly eminent,” and seeming indeed fit to lead the van of an army of kings.

The Abbot of Normoutier, with scarce less pomp, but far less dignity, followed in the rear. Next in this magnificent march came the horse-litters of the Lord of Courtenaye, the lady Isabelle with her attendants, and a train of noble females, whom devotion, curiosity, or the wish to display their sumptuous habits and furniture, had collected on that

day. Around them rode nobles and knights, their armour exchanged for weeds of peace, and their squires and attendants bearing their pensiles and bannerols as the indication of rank, not the announcement of hostility.

The litter in which the lady Isabelle rode was as gorgeous as that which Margaret of Valois described with such ostentatious accuracy more than three centuries afterwards. The cushions were of velvet embroidered; flourishings in gold, and curious paintings of the sufferings of Saints, diversified its carved and gilded pannels; and the Lord of Courtenaye, looking back from his seat, saw with delighted vanity the arms of the house of Courtenaye blazoned on every small flag that rose from the corners of the litter, like the pinnacles of a church-battlement, or the minarets of an Oriental mosque; for the morning, though in autumn, was so calm, that every decorative pendant stood as still, and gleamed as fair, as if a breeze were never to stir its folds again. Around this and other splendid litters, the

Crusaders and attendant peers and knights of France made, as they rode, their proud steeds caracole, sometimes throwing them almost on their haunches, to shew how skilfully and difficultly the rider kept his seat; and oftener, as they rode close by the litters kissing their ungloved hands, causing them to make certain capricio's, which drew first a faint shriek and then a smile from the fair spectators; nor did such action fail to display to full advantage the mantles of cloth of gold, the chains set with gems, the barrets sparkling with jewels and bending under the weight of plumage, now disclosed and now concealed by the banners waved over them by the squires and men-at-arms.

Amid the cavalcade rode Sir Paladour, without squire, banner-man, or attendant, distinguished only by a form that ranked him among the first and fairest of the sons of men, the report of former valour well-accredited by the recent glory of that combat in which he had encountered the giant-

champion of the Church, and rescued the noblest heiress in France from thralldom of person, will, and wealth. Formed in that perfect mould which antiquity chose for that of her gods, yet with that exquisite symmetry, alike obvious in the robe of silk or the elastic coat of mail, Sir Paladour rode near the litter of the lady Isabelle; and not all the flutter of emblazoned banners, the gorgeous array of attendants, ecclesiastical, civil, or martial, the long parade of caparisoned steeds and sumptuous litters, nor the glow and glitter of their proud riders, could prevent the lady from often waving her white hand from her litter to Sir Paladour,—nor him, though many heads bowed at the signal, from understanding to whom that mark of distinction was addressed. But his proud steed felt the impulse that the rider scarce dared own; for at once he felt the spur and the rein, and his fiercest bounds at the unwonted manege were scarce so high and wild as the throbblings of Paladour's heart.

The place of meeting fixed on was a vast plain surrounded by hills, in the neighbourhood of the Castle, and in the territories of Courtenaye. The eminences that enclosed this plain were covered with spectators, many hours previous to the arrival of the slow-travelling cavalcade of the Crusaders: hundreds, and even thousands, had risen at midnight to be in time for the spectacle, and before dawn their dimly-defined forms were seen moving in shadowy masses, like mist on the hill-tops which commanded the plain. They were arranged, in spite of their immense and increasing multitudes, in amply-accommodated rows, and were "at large though without number," till, as the sun arose, it seemed as if one vast sheet of human vegetation covered the hills with a kind of spontaneous efflorescence. There they sat, still and patient, forming to themselves magnificent ideas of the spectacle they were to witness; and a few hours after dawn their most ambitious anticipations were realized,

as the van of the long procession of the Crusaders appeared, gleaming in gold on the summit of a richly-wooded hill, like the sun rising in his glory.

The plain on which the parties were to meet seemed, indeed, like an apt and ample theatre for the splendid and eventful drama that was to be acted on it: it was almost square, and bounded on two of its sides by rocks of dark granite, hewed by the hand of Nature into a resemblance of terraces, and crowded to their very pinnacles by thousands who "sent their souls into their eyes."

The remaining sides were as opposite in their character and scenery as in their position. The march of the Crusaders wound by an easy path down hills, feathered from their base to their summit with the larch, the pine, and the picturesque ash-tree, with its hoary trunk and leaves of the lightest green; and on the rich sward that clothed its declivities, flowers were glowing and scents were breathing, and all that is grand

and lovely in Nature was effusing its bounty and its beauty. As the pageant first rose on the summit of the hill, the voices of thousands of spectators pealing in thunder from the rocks on which their dark and crowded masses rested, (like the clouds from whence the thunder issues) sent forth a shout of mingled triumph on their appearance and approbation of their cause; and its echoes continued to roll round the hills long after the lips of the acclaimers were closed, as if the spirits of the mountains had caught up the sound, and swelled and prolonged it with the powers of more than mortal intonation.

And now between the trees, with their dark trunks and leaves of vivid green slightly discoloured by the tints of autumn, the proud array of the Crusaders came glancing nearer; and every moment were more distinctly seen the gleams of glittering mantles, of steeds caparisoned in embroidery, of floating plumage and gemmed banners, and they gorgeously emblazoned with all the rich and fantastic pro-

fusion of heraldic devices; the group now emerging from the greenwood shade, now concealed by a thick cluster of ancient trees, now gleaming gaily out on a spot of greensward, and now at length pouring the full glory of their march in all the splendour of broad sun-light on the open plain, whose surrounding scenery with all its magnificence of Nature, seemed but an appendage to the dignity who were born to be her lords.

As the great standard floated into the valley, the multitudes, that covered the hills, made the holy sign with the solemn ardour of rapturous devotion. The Bishop of Toulouse caught the signal, and made a sign to the ecclesiastical attendants to raise in chorus the psalm "Quare fremuerunt gentes?" The melody, or chaunt, adapted to these words was so simple and monotonous, that it was easily caught and repeated by those to whose ears it was wafted, and thousands on thousands of voices, above, below, and around, in ascending circles thundered "Quare

fremuerent gentes?" till the very mountains seemed vocal from base to summit; and Nature and the elements appeared inspired and voiceful in the spontaneous eloquence of musical devotion.

Right opposite to the richly-clothed and verdurous hill from which the Crusaders had descended, rose a naked rock, bare, save that here and there it was dotted with a few firs; the sterility of the soil denying any other produce even under the sunny skies of Languedoc. There was no path down its rude sides; the passenger had to make his perilous way from crag to crag, slowly and ungracefully. Nothing in inanimate nature was ever more dreary, comfortless, and unlovely; and nothing in animated nature seemed better suited to the cheerless scene, than the group of the Albigeois, who, clad in the grey woollen garments worn by the peasantry (and some of them in sheep-skins), slowly and painfully wound their way down the dangerous declivities of the hill. The group

consisted of the delegates of the Albigeois, and was chiefly composed of their preachers, Mattathias and the chief of their military leaders having been disabled in their late conflict. Pierre the pastor was in their van; and from long habit and fond associations believing himself unable to walk without the aid of his grand-daughter, he was supported by Genevieve. This sole appearance of an humble female, consecrated by duty and sustained by motive alone, heightened instead of destroying the delicacy among so many persons of the other sex, though of her own community, and silently enhanced the respect it claimed.

As the party advanced into the plain, singing the psalm "In exitu Israel," there was no applause, no echoed thunders of the mountains: violence was indeed forbidden, but disdain and hatred were strongly expressed in the profound silence that attended their progress; and the feeble and ill-modulated strain, supported by tuneless tenors and hoarse bases, contrasted with the choral magnificence

of the Crusaders' hymn; to which the very air bore burthen, struck the ear as powerfully as their appearance did the eye; their squalid garments, coarse visages, and uncouth procession, stood in helpless opposition to all that Nature could boast of loveliness, or earth could display of magnificence.

The combat seemed fought and lost already in the eyes of the spectators: it was singular, too, though accidental, that the sun had been pouring the full brightness of his morning-rays (in a glorious September morn) on the path by which the Crusaders had descended, while the bleak and sterile rock down which the Albigeois wound their painful way threw its shadow far and deep westward, darkening their progress as they went, so that their feet seemed literally to "stumble on the dark mountains," and Nature herself to give evil omen, and take up "a taunting proverb against them."

Undismayed (or at least appearing so), the humble party descended into the valley; but

not the coarse hood and thick folds of the woollen mantle which Genevieve drew closely round her, could conceal a form that united the spiritualized graces of a Madonna with the physical perfection of a classic statue.

Her eyes were cast down, but there was a light from beneath their veined lids; her step was slow and her head dejected; but there was a natural majesty, an air of more than mortal purity and calmness diffused about her, as if, in the language of the poet, Nature had said of her, "she shall be a lady of my own."

The Albigeois had descended to the plain, but stood at a respectful distance from the band of the Crusaders, feudal feelings still operating strongly on their associations: they felt it like a crime to approach the presence of "the earth's high lords" till summoned. During the interval the Bishop of Toulouse prepared to celebrate mass under the superb shade of a silken pavilion. There was no lack of implements for that imposing cere-

mony ; vases, tapers, flowers, incense, bowing acolytes, and all the ritual pomp which attends its celebration under the “ high embowed ” roof of a cathedral. The Albigeois, while what they termed the abomination of the mass was going on, stiffly averted their heads, and prayed earnestly, but internally, so as not to disturb the ceremony, to be delivered from the snare thereof, adding, “ Surely in vain is the snare spread in the sight of any bird.”

The ceremony over, the Bishop of Toulouse prepared to address the heretics. The bishop was deemed the ablest controversialist of the age ; and so perhaps he might be—for it is a curious and undoubted fact, that infidels always make the best controversialists.

The zeal of a believer may carry him too far, or his humility may withhold him too much ; but the infidel has neither zeal to mislead, nor humility to check him : no language can shock, no objections alarm him. The appalling terms in which doubts and ob-

jections are clothed, compel the believer to stop his ears, instead of answering them—he shuts out the cries of violated religion, instead of flying to her rescue. The curiosity that first tempted the infidel to enquire and to doubt, conducts him fearlessly on; while the believer pauses from reverence, and dares not follow his antagonist to the perilous spot to which he challenges him.

In a word, the believer walks the dark and intricate maze of controversy like a rich, and, therefore, a jealous and timid passenger: the infidel ranges about like a needy assassin; he may gain something, pride at least, by success, and he has certainly nothing to lose. The bishop had this advantage (if it can be reckoned one), and moreover the bishop possessed eloquence to delude, learning to confound, genius to dazzle, and dignity to awe, the proudest assembly of his day. In his discourse, or rather his address, to the Albigeois, he had tact enough to discover that with these children of the moun-

tain and the mist, beings whose lives were passed amid the fiercest conflicts of the elements of Nature, and the struggles of human passion, with which the former have, perhaps, an undefined, and as yet unanalysed alliance ; beings, who lived for many months of their comfortless year on ice-clad summits, or in snow-heaped valleys, plunging amid precipices of frozen snow to save their sheep, and returning on their chilly path to hear the word of exhortation or of prayer from a half-clad pastor in a hovel, that tottered with the storm, or more frequently without even that frail shelter, amid the acclivities of rocks, the roar of many waters, and the thunders of heaven :—that with such, it was expedient to adopt other than the usual tone of controversy in that fierce and stormy age ; he made, therefore, ample allowance in his address for these physical contingencies. He knew and felt that men so brought up, were likely to be rigid in their notions, and tenacious of their creeds, that the sternness of their physical

existence extended itself to their moral ; that such persons are almost invincible by argument—for the spleen they feel against Nature evaporates in revilements against those who have obtained the means to soften her dispensations. The rigour of their faith is truly a reflection of the rigour of their destiny ; and liberty (whether political or religious, the most rigid of all things) has always been the offspring of mountains and storms, and life uncivilized and unhappy—of beings exasperated by want, fierce from constraint, declaiming against luxury till they enjoyed it, struggling against power till they obtained it, and impatient of authority or domination, till they could exercise it on those who had inflicted it on them.

“Such hath been the origin of all revolutions,” thought the Bishop of Toulouse : “the aggrieved poor retort on the tyrannical rich ; they become aggressors in their turn, and repay with heavy interest their debt of wrong and injury ; but this—this matter hinging on words merely, may be checked

by words, in which I am not to seek; and then I may direct this torrent that threatens to overwhelm us into a safe and quiet channel, yea, turn it into a golden stream whose waves shall pay tribute to the treasury of the Vatican."

Thus thought the bishop during mass, and the same feeling (if he ever felt) appeared to predominate in his address to the Albigensis. He touched on all points of controversy, as matters in which all would agree, were their principles duly examined, and hinted that ample accommodation would be granted by the Church to scrupulous and delicate consciences. Lightly and gracefully he trod over the *ignes supposito cineri doloso* of the controversy. Transubstantiation, the mass, confession, image-worship, were all passed over with superficial and temporizing mention; for the bishop knew that on these points his antagonists were armed in complete mail; but he hoped, and not unreasonably, to send an arrow through the joints of their armour, that would penetrate the

champions' hearts if it did not touch on their convictions.

The Albigeois, with whom, as with all France, the character of the bishop stood high for learning and eloquence, were obviously struck by the mildness of his address, and the dexterous lenity with which he passed over, or treated as unimportant, certain points which they expected would have been insisted on as indispensable. There was a kind of vacillation, a reluctant disposition to listen, beginning to betray itself among them. Pierre, from his blindness, was unable to discover this, but Boanerges and the deacon were beginning to exchange looks of doubt and alarm: the bishop saw his advantage and pressed his point, addressing himself powerfully and exclusively to their feelings.

"Come back," he exclaimed, at the close of his appeal; "come back, ye wanderers, to the bosom of your long suffering mother: ye have wounded, ye have wronged her, but she is your mother still. The bosom

yet bleeding with the blows you have dealt is expanded this moment to receive and to embrace you; the arms you have tried to lop off are extended to invite you to peace and to felicity.

“The visible presence of the Deity amid these his most stupendous works calls on you for solemn deliberation and salutary choice. He hath shaken mountains mightier than those which lower and darken around you; and will you in your pride be more inflexible than they? He hath made the streams to gush from rocks more hard and sterile than those from which you descended; and will your hearts be less penetrable than they? All Nature, animated and inanimate, is pleading with you; see this plain overspread with the mighty of the earth, the nobles of the land: with sheathed sword and hands held out in peace they supplicate you to have mercy on your own souls. Behold those hills covered to their summits with thousands of the faithful: they implore you, by their presence to turn from the error of

your way and live. Behold," he cried, "beings above the heights of the utmost hills. Yon vast congregation is but a shadow of that which watches you from above. There be patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs, saints and spirits in paradise; and the seraphim in ascending circles of glory, order above order, up to the hierarchy of the bright archangels who stand nearest to the throne of God and tremble at their own exaltation: all that glorious company are pleading for you, *to* you, this moment. Myriads on myriads, from glorified mortals to the first order of created beings; angels who kept their first estate: such are your witnesses, your advocates. They bend from their intercession—they look down on you: they say, for you we burned and bled—for you were we stretched on the rack and chained to the stake; by the vast weight of our merits we have inclined the eternal scales in your behalf, till the accusing angel himself resigned his office."

Here a murmur began to arise among a

band of the Albigeois, to whose ears the sound of *merit* was an abomination.

“And even above that glorious circle,” resumed the Bishop, “high beyond the highest, and bright above the brightest, the Mother of God herself appears, as in the vision of the mystic book, clothed with the sun, and the moon beneath her feet, and in her arms the form of him who created both.” And as he spoke the bishop fervently kissed the gorgeous crucifix that was appended from his shoulders.

The murmur among the Albigeois increased.

The bishop watched and waited till the murmur subsided: he allowed the wave to dash in full force, and sailed in triumph on its recoiling surge. “Spurn not the cross,” he cried, “for the sake of him who hung thereon! If ye boast your love to him, if ye treasure in your hearts every word he uttered, every precept he enjoined, every ordinance he appointed, scorn not those who hallow with their lips and their hearts the

memorial of him whom both are bound to love. You cherish his faith in your hearts ; we press its symbol to our lips. Is it possible we can shew inwardly or outwardly too much devotion to Him to whom both look alike for salvation ? Shall men differ for modes, when the spirit and the system is the same ?—and even in those modes, have not saints agreed with us ? Can we not reckon against your feeble, and unauthorized, and recent examples, our saints, our anchorites, our eremites, our holy men whose memory hath been embalmed from age to age, and in the period of twelve hundred years have kept the odour of that memory undiminished ? We point your steps to that bright track : behold who have preceded you ; see how their path is gemmed and studded, not with crowns and coronals of this earth, not with tiaras and mitres. Have you wept ?—so have they. Have you suffered ?—so have they. Have you bled ?—their blood was first shed for you. There are the palms of mar-

tyrs,—branches of living emerald ; the tears of saints turned to diamonds that paved their way to Heaven as they shed them ; the blood of martyrs, whose every drop is now a ruby in their celestial coronals. There be the treasures unexhausted, inexhaustible, of their accumulated merits, which the Church throws open to you, overlaying the way of your return with the gems and gold of the sanctuary of Heaven.” He paused : the Albigeois stood attentive and reverent—but there was neither movement nor answer amid their assembly, and this silence was evidently neither that of conviction nor even of hesitation. “ God ! ” exclaimed the bishop, (for an infidel can sometimes work himself into the semblance of an enthusiast by the assistance of his passions,) “ if there be fifty righteous in that heretical Sodom—thirty, ten, nay one, let them come forth.”

Not a foot was advanced—not a voice was heard among the vast multitude.

Pierre, the pastor, alone tottered forth, supported by Genevieve, and stood almost opposite to the bishop.

“Silence hath answered thee,” said the sightless pastor. He turned solemnly towards the congregation. They stood mute and motionless as the dead.

The blind old man appeared to hear this silence: he drew a furrow with his staff in the sands of the plain, between his congregation and the band of the Crusaders. “Pass it who will!” he exclaimed: he listened with hearing rendered more acute by the privation of the organs of sight: no sound of voice or step was heard. He shook his white and streaming hair in triumph. “Silence hath answered thee,” he repeated. “There is not one amongst us, from the stoutest that can wield a club, to the timid maiden on whom I lean, who will sell their birthright unto thee! We are poor, and afflicted, and despised; but every man in our host is a Joshua, and every woman a Miriam!” In his emotion, he dropped his staff, which

Genevieve stooped to recover. In the action, her mantle and hood, partially displaced, disclosed a glimpse of her form and countenance : her long dark hair almost touched the ground, and there was a light of holy triumph in her eye and on her features, that gave them for a moment a character almost unearthly. It was but for a moment ! She hastily replaced her mantle, folded herself in it, and stood like a veiled statue by the pastor.

Short as was the interval, the bishop had seen her, and that was enough in his thoughts to decide her destiny. He stood for a space silent, his eyes still fixed on her shrouded figure ; but instantly recovering himself, he pursued his address to the Albigeois ; but his tone was now changed from the conciliatory and expostulative to the minatory and commanding. “ Unhappy men ! ” he thundered, “ ye have sealed your doom—sealed it in both worlds : the book of life was unfolded to you that ye might write your names on its page, and Paradise would have smiled as you traced them. Ye have shut that book ;

and now another volume is opened, and on its burning leaves I see your doom inscribed, "Death! death! temporal and eternal!"—and thousands of voices from vale, and rock, and mountain, chorussed the denunciation, "Death! death! temporal and eternal death to the heretics!"

The pastor attempted to speak, but his voice was drowned by the powerful tones of Boanerges, struggling forth amid the shouts of the multitude. "We are not careful," he cried, addressing the Bishop of Toulouse, "to answer thee farther in this matter. Thou mayest doom our bodies to torture, and our lives to the sword; but every soul, as it parts from its ruined tabernacle, shall swell the cry that issues against ye from beneath the footstool of the judge, 'How long, Lord! how long!'"

Language so unusual produced for some time an amazed silence on the part of the Crusaders; and the deacon, with virulent pertinacity, took up the word, which he could not help seasoning with occasional references

to his favourite propensity. "And who art thou," he cried to the astonished Prelate, "that scatterest the fold of the Lord, and pushest them with shoulder and side from the fat pastures wherein they should dwell safely? Thou hast thyself eat of the fat and drunk of the sweet, I warrant me; yea, thy food hath been of the kidneys of wheat and the fat of fat rams, and thy drink of the vine of Sibmah and the vintage of Elealeh;—and comest thou here to scare the chosen people who wander in the wilderness, and are fain to feed on manna, while thou wast feasting amid the flesh-pots of Egypt?"

The bishop fixed his stern and steady gaze on the speaker without answering; but his cross-bearer, who noted his lord's expression, said to himself, "That heretic's doom is sealed." But all other sounds were now lost amid the indignant clamour of the Crusaders, who, scorning to be thus baited by their vassalry, rode fiercely round the pavilion, under whose silken awning the Bishop of Toulouse still stood.

Loudest was heard the voice of Simon de Montfort, who, spurring before them all, exclaimed, "Come we here to be rent by these swine, my lords? Call you this a conference, where your overmuch patience is answered by the blunt and bitter rudeness of villain peasants? A conference, I trow!!! with thee (to Pierre), blind of soul as blind of sight, or with that skin-clad ambassador" (pointing to Boanerges, who was arrayed in skins with the wool unshorn), "who seems to have come deputed by a sort of goats, that have lent him their best robes to grace their grave commission withal."

"Misproud lord!" retorted the preacher, "it would better become thee to cast thine eyes on the vain attire of thine arch-priest, who arrays himself in scarlet and gold, and precious stone, the livery of that Babylonian harlot whose seat is on the seven hills that totter while I speak — better to cast thy beclouded eyes on *him*, and ask thyself whether he or I most resemble those who 'wandered

about in sheep-skins and in goat-skins—of whom the world was not worthy.’”

“The foul fiend ha’ me!” exclaimed De Montfort, foaming with fury;—“an’ if there were lance in my hand, I would not nail thee to the earth as thou standest, vile peasant! My lord of Toulouse, let us but charge among these dogs with our riding-rods, and they will flee as the slaves in old story, that my chaplain tells of, fled from their masters at the sound of the lash.”

“Foul shame and scorn it were,” said Paladour, interposing, “to assail unarmed and helpless men in the hour of truce.”

“And darest thou oppose thy green wit and unfledged valour against me in this matter?” said the fierce lord, reining up his steed by Sir Paladour, and bending his stern aspect on him.

“For green wit we youth must be content to bear a gibe from our seniors,” said Sir Aymer; “but men deemed his valour well-fledged in the plumage of De Montfort’s crest

what time it swept the dust in the tourney lists of the Castle of Courtenaye."

"Oh, peace!—for shame, if not for Heaven's sake, peace!" cried the Monk of Montcalm:—"rein in the fierceness of your vainly incensed spirits, lest the enemy you despise laugh you to scorn."

"Here break we off," said the Bishop of Toulouse, rising with dignity. "The long-suffering patience of the Church hath been trampled on, her tender mercies rejected and despised; and for you (for I am not unskilled in those Jewish phrases in which ye delight)—for you, who have whetted the sword that is to smite you in pieces—who have hewn out with your own hands from the mountain the stone that is to fall and crush you—for you, after this last hour of insulted mercy, every implement of mortal might shall be let loose against you; and should they fail—but they will not fail—the thunders of the Church's curse, outroaring the thunders of the hills where ye seek for shelter, shall pursue you, to blast,

wither, and exterminate you, till your name perish from off the face of the earth. Blessed shall he be whose weapon is but tinged with your blood, and thrice blessed shall he be whose hands reek with it. As it is written, ‘Thy foot shall be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs may be red through the same.’” As he spoke, the Crusaders prepared to depart; and the sound of their movement as those who rode reined up their steeds, and those who had dismounted sprung on theirs, signing to their attendants, who on foot or on horse hastened forward to stand by the reins of their respective lords, was, in the language and in the ears of the Albigeois, like the sound of many waters.

“Hear, mighty lords,” cried Pierre, “hear yet a word. Suffer us but to depart, at least the women and the little ones: suffer them at least to depart in safety into the mountains of the Cevennes, or the region of Arragon. Spare the lives of wretched peasants; send us forth into the wilderness

lacking all things but God and his word—and if we perish, we perish: wherefore should you set yourselves in array, and make your battle strong against men, amid thousands of whom there is not one who skills to draw the sword, or fight with spear and shield?”

At this appeal the Monk of Montcalm held up his locked hands with an air of supplication to the Bishop of Toulouse. The prelate waved him off indignantly with one arm, while he extended the other towards the Albigeois.

“What!” he cried, “shall ye be suffered to go forth like the locusts in that mystic vision of him who saw the apocalypse in Patmos, to shed your poison over the face of all the earth? Behold,” he added, pausing, and holding forth his robe; “behold I turn once more like the ambassadors of old, to proffer peace or war, safety or destruction.—Choose, while yet a moment for choice.—Choose.”

The Albigeois, as one man, averted their heads, and with one voice called on Heaven;

and the pastor with a faint exclamation between triumph and thanksgiving, fell quite exhausted into the arms of Genevieve. The Bishop of Toulouse cast a terrible look on the devoted band; "The volume is closed—the door is shut—the day is past," he cried; "your blood be on your own heads:—tomorrow ye die."

CHAPTER IV.

My steed shall ride through ranks so rude,
As through the moorland fern ;
Then ne'er let the gentle Norman blood
Grow cold for highland kern.

THE ANTIQUARY.

THE carousal at the Castle that night was deep and late. The Crusaders felt like men who had but to lift an arm on the morrow, whose sole and single blow was sufficient to sweep the Albigeois from the face of the earth. The cups were pledged and drained to the destruction of heretics. The Monk of Montcalm alone was absent ; he had retired with a grieved heart to his shed in the courts of the Castle, and passed the night in prayer. De Montfort, whose spirit, ferocious as it was martial, kindled alike at the

thoughts of a slaughter or a battle, was in tumultuous spirits, and rudely proposed that the lady Isabelle should accompany them to what he called the heretic-hunt on the morrow. "You shall hold me excused, lord of Montfort," said the lady shrinking at the motion. — "Nay, lady," said Sir Aymer, "be not so fond to say us nay—what, art thou not an Atalanta, a huntress, one of Dian's nymphs? I warrant me, thou lovest to ride through the green wood with a merlin on thy wrist, or to wander on the banks of the merry Garonne, to fly thy sparrowhawk at a pigeon, or mark thy falcon stoop at a partridge."—"Tush," cried De Montfort, "thou talkest of sport for my lady's waiting-damsels. I warrant, she better loves to spur her palfrey through glade and brake, when the huntsman winds a morn, and the stag holds out his throat to her fair hand, and the raven perching near flutters and croaks till the quarry is broke."

"Never, trust me," said the lady, the tears almost coming to her beautiful eyes,

which Paladour had never thought more beautiful, "if it pitied not my very heart to see his plight, and I chid myself for the delight I had taken in that cruel sport."—"Well then, to please thee, they shall not be stags, but a sort of foxes, that we shall deem we hunt to-morrow," said De Montfort—"foul, filthy vermin. We will place thee on a hill, whence thou shalt see us untappice the sly malign beasts, smoke them out of their earth-holes, and chase them over the country with their young, till not one of the foul vermin be left to poison the land."

"Not one—not one be left alive," was the universal shout of the Crusaders. "*Adolescentulos cum puellis, senes cum infantibus*, as the Psalmist hath it," chaunted the Abbot of Normoutier.—"Alas," said the lady, shuddering, "in times of peril, such sights must be; but must women's eyes be forced to look on them?"—"Marry must they," persevered De Montfort. "As you would wish for short shrift and light penance next confession-day.

My lord of Toulouse, you will yield this fair back-slider such weighty reasons." — "Fair niece," interposed the Lord of Courtenaye, "you will do us pleasure in hearkening to the bishop's reasons." — "I trust, noble lady," the bishop was commencing, when one of the menials hastily entering the hall put into his hands a torn and bloody scroll.

"How now, knave!" said the Lord of Courtenaye, "be these thy manners to thrust a villainous and filthy scroll into the hands of my lord of Toulouse?" The bishop did not mark him: his countenance changed as his eyes fell on the disfigured paper.

"What hath changed your favour, lord bishop?" said De Montfort.

"Read," answered the bishop, putting the paper into his hands. It contained only the word "Beware!" written in blood, and but freshly traced.

While De Montfort with some difficulty decyphered the word, the domestic answered the enquiries of the bishop. He said that he

had followed in the train of the Crusaders that day; and that returning late he had fallen over something that lay in his path: a groan convinced him it was a living being, but one who had not long to live. The unfortunate man was unable to tell the name of his murderer; but he collected his dying strength to adjure him by gestures to convey the scroll, marked with his own blood, to the Bishop of Toulouse; and, while he was speaking, expired. The relator had no more to disclose, and the bishop mused in silence.

“A toy, a device, on my life, a very foolish and insufficient toy!” cried De Montfort, striking down the scroll with the hilt of his dagger: “I will wage,” he continued, raising his voice—“I will wage the broad lands of De Montfort against the peak of l’Aigle sur la Roche—a noble’s having ’gainst an outlaw’s hold, that, leaving the body of our battle to fence these towers, without man-at-arms, squire, or page, I and the knights-crusaders alone will encounter the heretics, and not

leave one to tell the tidings within the bounds of fair. Languedoc or ere the sun be high to-morrow !”

This wild proposal was received with as wild acclamation by the knights, who began to be inflamed with the wine they had drunk, and by the hope of distinguishing themselves in the eyes of lady Isabelle.

The bishop, who only might controul the frantic purpose of De Montfort, was still musing, heedless of what passed ; and Sir Aymer alone had the sense to see the danger and folly of the motion, and the courage to oppose it. “ Why, how now, mad lords !” he said, “ where is your wisdom ?—where is your discretion ?—nay, where is your valour ? Sith true valour setteth not more by the peril it risks, than by the glory that gives to peril its sweetness and its price. Be ye such peevish and unskilled chess-players, that ye will hazard Knight, Bishop, and Castle, against a file of beggarly pawns ? Are ye avised what men they be against whom ye thrust yourselves in such raw and unpre-

pared fashion? By the mass! they fight from behind a bare crag, as it were a warded tower;—then they have a whoreson, villainous trick of rolling down stones from the heights on visitors that come not in a fashion to please them; and they will send you over a thicket certain damnable convincing touches with arrows that will find out every crevice in your armour. An' ye come not back stuck all over with darts, like so many Saint Sebastians, or battered like cocks with cudgels at Shrovetide, say there is neither truth, wisdom, nor manhood in Sir Aymer." And so ending his free, honest speech, the knight sat down. His blunt rebuke was lost in the tumult of voices scoffing and shouting; and scarcely could the knights be withheld, by the mover of the mad enterprise himself, from rushing out to undertake it that moment.

"Forbear!" said De Montfort, exalting his voice—"forbear while I marshal the cavalcade for the chase to-morrow. The lady Isabelle and her damsels, most like the hun-

tress-goddess and her nymphs, shall be seated on a hill to view us wind and run down the prey. My lord abbot and the reverend brethren of Normoutier shall be placed to chaunt litanies for us on the brow of a mountain—”

“How far distant?” interrupted the abbot:

“On a peak of the Pyrenees, an’ thou wilt,” said De Montfort, angrily.

“Nay, I speak not in respect of fear; but, the more distant the view of a battle, the clearer still it always proved to my sight as it were,” replied the abbot. “I promise you I shall be the first to bear glad tidings from the mountains; and now I bethink me,—is there not an instance for it?”

“*Quam speciosa sunt vestigia*,” whispered the cross-bearer.

“Mass and well said!” quoth the abbot: “it was a joyous hunting-song that; but all those carnal toys have clean slipped from my memory.”

“And we,” pursued De Montfort, shouting with fierce delight—“we keen hunters will

unearth these foxes that spoil the vineyard of the Church, and chase them over the country like Samsons, with firebrands at their tails. For thee, young Paladour, do thy devoir as thou didst on the day of tourney; and bethink thee, it is a lighter task to lay the heads of a thousand heretics in the dust, than to make De Montfort's bend to his saddle-bow."—"By Heaven, lord," said the generous Paladour, "I have little heart for wasteful and unresisted slaughter. It yields me no joy to ride over a field of wretched peasantry, as I would over the fern of a moor, and lop head and limb as lightly as a peasant-boy mows down thistles with his staff. Trust me, when the poor knaves clasp my knees or footcloth with their unarmed hands, and sue for life, I am fain to avert my head, that I may not see the blows I deal."

A murmur of derision rose among the guests at these words, which closed the debate; and it now only remained for the knights each to choose a brother-in-arms for the encounter, who might succour them when

assailed, or defend them if wounded, as they had deprived themselves of the wonted attendance of their squires and pages. Paladour named Sir Amirald.

“That young knight is a stranger to these walls, methinks,” remarked De Montfort.

“He is no stranger to any spot where peril may be braved or honour won,” answered Paladour.

“Indeed it troubles me much,” said the Lord of Courtenaye, replying to De Montfort:—“know you the cause, valiant Sir Paladour?” and trembling as he spoke, he attempted to raise his eyes to the young knight, but dropped them instantly. The free and prompt reply of Sir Paladour that he was ignorant of the cause, abated his apprehensions for a moment; but he was heard to murmur to himself, “This hawk but *canceliers**; he will pounce anon.”

While this was passing, De Verac and

* A term in falconry, meaning that the bird hovers over its prey before it descends on it.

Semonville held a whispered sort of discontented conversation in a recessed window, where they had withdrawn themselves from the carousers. "Thou seest how lightly we are held," said the latter resentfully; "none but this Sir Paladour to be named as the peer of De Montfort—none but Sir Paladour to lead the lady forth off the hall, and kiss his fingers with apish courtesy as she mounts her palfrey."—"I ever deemed lightly of that lady's discretion, since she dispraised my habit that was so curiously wrought with——" "I have seen it," said the other, who justly dreaded this exordium—"it was, indeed, of a rare and singular fashion."—"Thou hast a marvellous subtle judgment," said his gratified associate; "and of a truth I love thee; and wilt thou but join thy wit to mine, I will confide to thee a plot that shall pluck the feather vanity from this jay of a Paladour, and enforce my lady to turn the vane of her inclinations to whatsoever point the breath of our choice may vary to."

"Sometimes I think I have but a small wit," replied his friend; "but when I hear

of a plot, I promise you I rise hugely in mine own conceit. Any churl, thou knowest, may guide himself by his vile common sense, and plod on in the straight-forward path that leads to the thing he needeth; but it is plots, schemes, quaint devices, and delicate fine stratagems that shew the wit of man; and truly I was always willing to be in a plot, though I never could devise either to frame one, or, indeed, to get out of one when devised by another."

"I will disclose to thee a fine-witted, deep-reaching trick of invention, requiring valour withal," said De Verac.—"I pray thee then disclose it in level terms," replied the other; "and not as if thou wast rehearsing a troubadour's song, or reading out of a book of riddles."

"Thou hast read in the adventures of that wandering knight, Sir Eneas of Troy, painfully penned by the great magician Virgil."—

"By my grandame's soul, I never read line or letter in the book thou namest."—"Sayest thou me so? and how chanced that, Sir knight?"

"Mass, I know not; except that I never was

taught to read.”—“ A reason not to be impugned; list, then, and mark: there were in the train of this Sir Eneas two young knights, by name Nisus and Euryalus, sworn brothers; the one wore the favours of Queen Hecuba of Troy, the other those of the most royal lady, the Princess Cassandra her daughter, and both had vowed to do some high emprize in honour of their ladies. I will now describe their arms, devices, equipments, and caparisons.”—“ Time will serve for that,” said Semonville hastily, “ when thou hast found the end of thy tale.”—“ The camp of Sir Eneas being besieged by a host of godless and malicious pagans, what does me young Sir Nisus and his comrade, but sally forth by night among them, cut off their heads as they slept, and carry back their arms and spoils to their own camp, where they were received with all manner of honours, as shouts, music, and other delights, and royally feasted by Sir Eneas in his tent, under a canopy wrought by Queen Dido, his leman.” “ Marry, a pleasant figment; but where lieth

the plot?" said the literal De Semonville. "Askest thou? What hinders that we two sally forth under cover of night, kill and disperse the heretics, and trundle their heads before us, like so many tennis-balls, to the Castle-gate, where if my lady look not lovingly on our valour, and Sir Paladour shew not beside us like a holiday peasant's tin brooch to the topaz in my barret of tissue, say I am neither politic nor valiant."

Semonville, who was as rashly brave as he was dull and wayward, received the motion with eager delight;—"And for our more assurance of safety, and because we will not be wandering all night through mire and moor, I will borrow the squire of this Sir Paladour, under show of helping to furbish mine armour for the morrow. Men say he hath marvellous skill in the perplexed paths with which this region aboundeth." "It is colourable; it is semblable," said De Verac with a nod of assent.—"Thus shall his vain courtesy (for he refuseth nothing gently sought) work his annoyance and de-

feat.”—“ But,” whispered Semonville anxiously, “ how shall we make escape?—the craven lord of the Castle hath the drawbridge raised, and the keys of all the gates from barbican to postern brought to him, ere he sleeps.”—“ I have a plot too for that, which I will shew thee if thou wilt come to my chamber—slack not to borrow Sir Paladour’s squire, and follow me.”

The boon was asked with dogged reserve, and granted by Paladour with graceful courtesy ; and the pair then retired to prepare for their sally from the Castle before midnight.

* * * * *

The lady Isabelle sat late within her chamber that night. She had determined on accompanying the Crusaders on the morrow, lest her farther refusal might expose her to the suspicion of heterodoxy (a charge which her conscience could not altogether disclaim, for pity in that age was heretodoxy, if felt for heretics); and she prolonged her orisons late, supplicating alternately for

the safety of the Crusaders, and the deliverance of the devoted Albigeois. Towards midnight she was disturbed by the sound of something heavy dropping into the court, and then of steps traversing it hastily. She opened the casement of her oratory, and looked out. The moon had risen; but the tower in which her chamber lay threw its vast shadow across the court, concealing those who trod it with speed and in darkness. They were De Verac, Semonville, and the attendant, with a damsel of her train. This female, who had been lightly won by the gorgeous habits and courtly language of Verac, had prevailed on her brother, the solitary warder of a neglected tower in the outer wall of the Castle, to assist them in escaping from a casement of it, and facilitating their passage over the moat, which was there nearly dry. As the lady gazed forth, another casement opened at some distance; and she paused for a space, irresolute whether to address a figure that appeared indistinctly at it. "Who is it?" at length

she said, "who watches at this late hour?" — "It is your beauty's servant and ever-wakeful meditator," answered the voice of Paladour.

"Did you hear steps or see figures cross the court of the Castle?" asked the lady.

"I did, noble lady: they were doubtless menials whom 'tendance on the banquet held late, and who are hastening to their lodgings."

"Alas! Sir knight, hie you to your couch," said the Lady: "to-morrow will be a day of toil, if not of peril, and you must needs lack rest."

"I may not rest, noble lady: my heart is heavy with many evil bodements, and my brain is possessed with thick and gloomy fantasies. I have wrestled with, but cannot overcome them: a vague and shapeless pre-sage of some undefined disaster keeps me waking. Lady, for the love of Heaven, quit not these towers to-morrow!"

"I fear my uncle's chiding, the blunt scoffs of that rude lord De Montfort, and the solemn anger of the bishop, more than

aught of peril in to-morrow's encounter," answered the lady. "And now a fair good rest, Sir Paladour: I might be lightly held, were I to prolong this conference at such late hour. The best thoughts of the night, and the lightest slumbers, be about your pillow!"

"Farewell, bright saint!—and may the pure spirits that minister to virgins' dreams, weave thine of such hues and texture as glow in the visions of sleeping saints, who part dreaming of Paradise—to wake in Heaven!"

CHAPTER V.

———When my hours
Were nice and lucky, men did ransom lives
Of me for jests ;—but now, I'll set my teeth,
And send to darkness all that stop me.

SHAKSPEARE'S *Antony and Cleopatra*.

THAT night was to the Albigeois one of unmixed consternation and horror.

The delegates returned with their answer of desolation. The devoted people saw their doom approach without the possibility of averting or retarding it ; not a resource was left. If they attempted to pass into Aragon, or to seek the Cevennes, the army of the Crusaders interposed itself. Amid the rocks and mountains where they now wandered, they must shortly perish by famine. Beziers and Carcassone were in ruins. Their friends in Toulouse were unable to protect them, could they even reach that city in safety ; and

the possibility of aid being supplied by Count Raymond had never occurred to them, for they were ignorant of his arrival in France. They saw "they were in evil plight." Some of the more enterprising leaders and enthusiastic preachers, among whom were Mattathias and Boanerges, suggested the idea of resistance; and even exhorted them to "resist unto blood."

But this proposal to an unarmed multitude, half of whom were women and children, only added to despondence the conviction of its helplessness. And after an evening of gloomy deliberation, they embraced with sore reluctance the last feeble chance of safety: this was, to separate into small distinct parties, and pursue various directions, some seeking shelter in the mountains, and some going towards Toulouse, that thus detached and divided, without appearance of union or resistance, they might afford less cause either for cupidity or hostility; "and thus," said Pierre, "if Edom and the armed men with him come and smite one

band, peradventure the other may escape, and a remnant yet be saved."

But this melancholy resolution, which necessarily involved the separation of the robust from the feeble, of parents from children, and of husbands from wives, required strength from above to support the victims in the moment of its execution. With fainting hearts and wearied spirits they implored that it might be deferred till dawn, and that this, the last night of their earthly intercourse, might be passed in prayer.

Fearful of being molested in their devotions by some of the fierce and licentious train of the Crusaders, who still loitered in scattered bands on the plain, they removed some distance to a spot whose deep and secret solitude had often afforded them concealment, and from whence their "songs of the night" had often arisen, heard only by the ear of Heaven.

It was night when they entered the rocky defile which led to a spot that seemed the oratory of Nature. The narrow path sud-

denly opened into an area, enclosed on every side by vast masses of rock; these masses projected as they ascended, so that, though the space below could contain the whole multitude, the precipices, almost meeting above, disclosed but a small portion of the heavens, whose brightly-twinkling stars alone proved to the eye it could be visible there. These appeared intensely vivid, as if seen from the bottom of a well.

The projections of the rocks, intercepting rain and dew, had precluded all vegetation, except where a few wild ash-trees twined their knotted fantastic roots among the fissures. One or two dark rills tinkled down the sides of the rock, and meeting in a brown and stilly pool at the bottom, seemed to rest there; then struggling on, forced their way, with a hoarse and troubled murmur, through the defile by which the wanderers entered the valley. Here the Albigeois assembled for the last time, to all human conjecture. In this last hour of danger, the innumerable differences that had distracted them in hours

of comparative safety, and which, in the exaggerations of their zeal, had often appeared as important as the vital doctrines of Christianity, now appeared lighter than vanity itself. The endless divisions and subdivisions of restless and unappeasable polemics, the doubtful gloss, the minute distinction, the metaphysical subtlety, the verbal nicety—labour as profitless as the attempt to divide an unit, or discover parts in a point—were all forgotten. And with one voice and one heart the congregation called on their ancient pastor to offer up his prayers with and for them, peradventure for the last time.

In this hour of extremity not only were systems compromised, but all distinction of characters was absorbed, as bodies lose their varieties of colour on the approach of night. The petulant acrimony of the deacon, the stern enthusiasm of Boanerges, the fanatic fury of Mattathias, were all subdued, all silenced, and the pure faith and meek holiness of the aged Pierre rose like the ark triumph-

ant over the waves, under whose prevailing waters the tops of the highest mountains were covered.

Towards midnight the voice of Pierre ceased, from his exhausted strength; and the whole multitude prayed in silence with their faces to the earth. Such was their absorption of spirit and intensity of devotion, that a shriek from one of the females was unheard, till its repetition made those who were near her demand the cause. Apart from the rest, she said she had heard an arrow whistle past her, and seen it lodge among some bushes at the entrance of the defile. Some, upon hastening to the spot, found the arrow still quivering there, and exclaimed in terror they were betrayed, and the signal was given for the work of slaughter.

Pierre checked the alarm by pointing out to them that the arrow was purposely sent in a direction where it could do no mischief; and he ventured even to intimate his hopes that it might rather be the effort of a friend to warn them, than of a foe to molest them.

A few moments of agonizing expectation passed, while this hope was to be confirmed or defeated:—they were soon over. A second arrow came whizzing past them in the same direction, and those who watched its flight saw a scroll attached to it. An hundred hands were instantly employed in searching for this missile, whose friendly purport was no longer matter of doubt, even to the most desponding. It was found and unfolded, a light was quickly struck, and it was singular that amid this poor and illiterate multitude, there were more to be found who possessed the rare acquirement of being able to read, than in the Castle of the Lord of Courtenaye—so intense had been their zeal for obtaining the knowledge of Scripture. The superscription was “To the Church which is in the wilderness.” And Boanerges, to whom it was given to be read, recognized the hand-writing of a chaplain of the Count of Toulouse; a man zealously attached to the cause of the Albigeois, and no less so to the Jewish phraseology, by which the more

enthusiastic of that day delighted to distinguish themselves. It contained the following words :

“ Whereas ye are as men appointed unto death, and as prisoners in the hold where there is no water, and because many dogs have come about you, and fat bulls of Basan close you in on every side ; therefore now look up and lift up your heads, for your deliverance draweth nigh, for behold he whom men call Raymond, even the lord of Toulouse, hath confronted the man of sin, which is antichrist, whose palace standeth on the seven hills. And lo, he hath passed over from the South, and cometh up to the help of the Lord against the mighty, even as Barak, the son of Abinoam, came up from Kedesh Naphthali with ten thousand men at his feet, all of them mighty men of valour, men who draw the sword. And because ye have sent aforetime messengers to him saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants, but come unto us and help us, that we perish not ; therefore now be strong and of good courage, for, as

the Lord liveth, before the morning be spread upon the mountains, your help shall be swift and sure, and though ye mourn with a very great mourning, like the mourning of Hadrимmon in the valley of Megiddo, yet a little while and your name shall be no longer Bochim,* but your name shall be called Maher-shalal-hash-baz,† because of the prey and of the spoil which the Lord shall give you of your enemies round about. And behold I, even I, have sent a swift messenger (whose running is as the running of Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok, who overran Cushy by the way of the plain, in the matter of Absalom,) and I have straitly charged him saying, make no long tarrying or delaying, and it shall be if the men, the children of Belial compass thee round about, that thou shalt make fast the letters to a swift arrow, and"—Here the manuscript was torn, and nothing but the signature was legible. "Written in the tenth day of the sixth month, even the

* Weeping. † Haste to the spoil—swift to the prey.

month September, by me Zerubbabel, whom men call Bertrand de Var."

The effect produced on the assembly by the perusal of this letter was in its expression as single as it was profound: with one accord they threw themselves with their faces on the earth in a mute agony of solemn gratitude; and the thanksgiving for a deliverance almost miraculous rose from their hearts alone.

There was now but one voice and one resolution among the whole multitude; with renewed strength and rekindled courage they prepared to penetrate further among the hills in the direction where they might expect the approaching army of the Count of Toulouse, the van of which they hoped to meet before the dawn of morning, and under whose flank they might find protection during the awful day, for whose event they pleaded solemnly to the God of battles. In the elevation of sudden hope, Mattathias and some of the more warlike, even proposed to set forth and encounter the band, who, from the latter part

of the letter, it was plain had intercepted the messenger; and this proposal, though rash and untimely, was so eagerly embraced, that Pierre forbore his fruitless opposition, and about fifty, armed with clubs and arrows, set out on the expedition, accompanied by Boanerges and the deacon, who, with a sudden illapse of valour, joined them, exclaiming, that the "lame should take the prey." The rest commenced their progress into the mountains, and for some time hope supplying them with supernatural strength, the most dejected forgot their fears, and the feeblest their weakness. But it was soon found that physical obstacles long continued are an overmatch for the power of imagination, however excited. The strongest and most resolute had departed with Mattathias, and the multitude who were journeying onward consisted chiefly of those who were feeblest in sex and in age, in all the lassitude of weariness and inanition.

"With her child of yesterday

The mother went, and she whose hour was come
Fell by the way side."

SOUTHEY'S *Roderick*.

The acclivities of the mountains seemed to become more arduous, and the mist that enveloped their summits seemed to darken as they approached them; many sat down in a mortal stupor, from which no power could wake them; and many, who still retained their intellect, with all the earnestness of suppliants implored that they might lie down and die. It was then that their aged pastor, and the ministering angel at his side, collected the last remains of their strength and spirits to sustain those whom hope and life were fast deserting. To those who were yet rational, he suggested the hope of deliverance; to the desponding, the consolations of religion: for every fear he had a word of alleviation—for every complainer a topic of comfort. He cherished every purpose of exertion; he fanned every spark of hope; and even when the lamp was gone out, he could supply it from the rich abundance with which faith had lighted his own. It was a rare and holy sight to see the weakest in sex and in years—an ancient man and a youthful maiden—concentrate in

themselves all the physical energy that could command success, with all the mental fortitude that defies despair.

Thus sustained and excited, the sufferers prepared for their last effort—it was made in profound silence; every one reserved his breath for the struggle—not a word was heard of fear or of hope, of comfort or of murmur. The effort was made—the summit was won—the mist that covered the tops of the mountain rolled slowly down its sides into the valley, where it lay like an ocean. A line of golden light fleckered the opposite horizon: it broadened—it brightened, till the sun burst forth in glory on the hills far eastward, and his first level rays glanced brightly on the broad banners and fair and wide-spread array of the army of Count Raymond of Toulouse.

The shout uttered by the Albigeois at this sight, resembled that sent forth by the crew of a vessel just going to pieces when day reveals to them a friendly shore, and boats

putting off to their assistance: it was a mixture of joy and desperation. The shouts that greeted them, on the other hand, were like those that hail the numbed and sunken-hearted mariner, inspiring hope and promising security.

All that they had dwelt on with anxious hope for many days, all that had sustained their spirits with distant and visionary comfort, was now realized in almost as many hours. To distribute nourishment, raiment, and cheering felicitations of safety and auguries of success, to assist those who were still able to reach the van of Count Raymond's army, and to encircle the hill with a band of archers for the protection of those who were not—to do all that the approach of danger would permit to be done, and say all that haste would suffer them to say, may easily be imagined as the prompt and joyful office of their friends.

Among multitudes thus singularly thrown together, there were many recognitions as

singular—mothers and daughters in the pastor's band recognized long-divided relatives in those who approached to welcome and protect them; and in the host of Raymond many a vizor was raised to gaze on countenances that seemed to them like those seen in a dream; and many a mailed arm strained in its clasp a form never expected to be embraced on this side the grave. But these endearments were short and mournful: clouded by the recollection of past calamity, and interrupted by the preparation for approaching danger.

It was not till the pastor had seen the feeblest of his flock supplied with the means of rest and refreshment, and the others content with the promise of them, that he began to sink under the fatigue that had already exhausted bodies far more vigorous and minds of more unyielding texture. Unable to descend the hill or cross the valley, he prepared to take the only repose the place afforded, by resting his head on the knees of Genevieve, who had seated herself on the ground beside

him, and whose white small fingers, clasped on his forehead, made delicate contrast to its deep furrows, dark hue, and dishevelled hoariness. Conscious of his exhausted strength, he replied to the importunities of Arnaud, and Genevieve's mute pressure of his hand, only by a faint smile, and a whisper, that that spot must be his Pisgah, since he was unable to enter into, or even (he added with a meek sigh) behold the land of rest from its summit.

The enquiries of Arnaud, however, soon discovered a sojourn less comfortless; and he hasted back with the intelligence, that if Pierre could summon strength enough to descend the declivity of the hill but a few paces, there was a cave, which had been inhabited by an eremite not long deceased, where he would be sheltered at least from the chill breeze of the mountains, and might rest on the bed of leaves its last inhabitant had left there. Supported by Genevieve and Arnaud, he struggled to make the attempt; and Genevieve, as they slowly approached

the spot, struck by its character of shade, seclusion, and quiet, mentally wished for such a retreat from the "sound of the trumpet and the alarm of war," where her pure existence might be passed in devotion, and sustained only by the herbs of the field and the stream that trickled from the rock. The hermitage was a cave scooped by the hand of Nature out of the rock; art had added one or two cavities for containing the crucifix and bed of its solitary inhabitant: to form these had been his only earthly employment. The entrance to the cave was shaded by some firs and pines; a small stream had worn its way down the upper cliff, and fell into a stone basin just at the entrance; above it rose a rude crucifix, formed out of the rock, but now clustered over with moss and ivy, so as to be almost indistinguishable: a few mossy branches of fir, once triangularly disposed, indicated a rude attempt at a belfry; but there was now neither bell nor hand to toll it! Genevieve, in spite of her creed, thought how holy and refreshing amid these

wilds, without track or tenant, its sound must once have been to the wandering traveller amid the shades of evening, or the wakeful religieux to whose ear it came amid the stillness of night. The door of wood still remained with its bolt and staple, apparently intended as a defence against the wolves or bears: its inmate was probably above the fears as well as the wishes that depend on, or are connected with, the agency of man. Here the pastor was conveyed, and here some of the more weak and weary were collected to congratulate and to partake of his retreat.

Genevieve had hardly spread the bed of withered leaves, and assisted the pastor to stretch his chilled and painful limbs on them, when a tumult of voices was heard without; and all hurried to the entrance to catch the sounds. Every ear was now as awake to the tidings of success, as they had been but a few hours before to the murmurs of despondency. In this case they were not mistaken.

The party of Mattathias and Boanerges

had surprised and led captive those who had been the means of scaring the messenger of Count Raymond's chaplain from approaching the retreat of the Albigeois; and were now returning with their prize, disputing the whole way how they were to dispose of them.

The captives were no other than the hapless adventurers De Verac, Semonville, and their ill-chosen guide, the squire of Sir Paladour, who still retained his boast of knowing every mountain-path and forest track in Languedoc, and his habit of leading astray every one who trusted to his guidance.

Long before they approached the cave, the shrill voice of Deacon Mephibosheth was heard exclaiming, "They shall be for a prey and a spoil, even as Shalman spoiled Betharbel in the day of battle: her infants were dashed in pieces, and her women with child ripped up."

The dogged and mortified tones of Semonville were heard in reply:—"Thou liest, foul knave! I am no infant; I would

thou wouldst know it; and if thou rippest me up for a woman with child, thou art no better than a notorious liar, and I will hang thee for it an' there be law in all Christentye, or Languedoc, which comes nearer to the matter."

The affectedly effeminate accents of Verac were then heard exclaiming, "Good knaves! good scoundrels! most worthy and absolute rascals! I pray you throttle me an' you will; but let it be with aught but your greasy fingers: a lady's garter will serve, if such commodity may be found here. Good goat-bearded apostle (to Boanerges), preach to thy hirsute brethren; thou shouldst have a fellow-feeling for my mustachios. I warrant me now thou hast no crisping tongs to countervail the damage they have undergone withal. Good fellow! good selvaggio! most dulcified and depilated Orson (to Mattathias), if thou wilt needs be near me, at least restore me my pouncet-box, that I die not the death of the unsavoury." All this time the deacon was drawing tighter the cords which bound the

hands of the luckless knight. "I thank thee, gentle squire, for the courtesy bestowed on my wrists ; extend it so far, I pray thee, as not to profane with thy plebeian touch the tissue sleeve which—— God's nails, and all other petty oaths !" he exclaimed with unrestrained vexation, as one of the rudest of the party, thinking he talked too fast and moved too slow, gave him a thrust *au derriere*—— "God's nails ! the villain hath not only made incision in my flesh, but hath rent my gambazon, quilted with thread of gold and lilac, in a most delicate and unnameable part. What, Bucolican Sylvan ! deemest thou art goading an ox to tillage, or——?"

"Lead them on !" said the stern voice of Mattathias, "that we may hew them to pieces before the Lord in Gilgal."

"There is no such place in France, thou wordy fellow," said Semonville, sturdily : "and I would I might be hanged ere I consent to be hewed in pieces for any man's pleasure in outlandish parts ; never trust me else : so look to it, thou wert best "

“ I pray thee, let us first examine them,” said Boanerges ; “ it may be that we may gather something out of them.”

Arnaud joined in this petition, which he enforced by strong reasons ; and Mattathias, though refusing to be convinced by either, leaned on his club at a distance, and growled a sullen assent. The party were then ushered into the cave. Pierre was plunged into that profound sleep which no tumult could disturb ; and Genevieve cast her eyes on the band only to see if Amand were yet alive, and among them.

Meanwhile others of the party were examining the splendid armour and ornaments which they had lost no time in despoiling their prisoners of. Mattathias was attempting to adapt to his giant limbs the corslet and cuisses of the slender De Verac ; and Boanerges was exclaiming that the richly inlaid vant-brace should be made plates of gold for the coverings of the altar.

“ And what hast thou won ?” said Arnaud to the deacon : “ I trow thou hast not been slack in the matter of the spoil.”

“Of a verity it is a kid,” replied the deacon; “even a kid of the goats, which the men, the sons of Belial, have roasted with fire, and would as it were have eaten very exceedingly; but now behold it shall lie on mine own platter, and be carved with mine own knife, and be unto me as a kid.”

Arnaud now commenced his examination of the prisoners. “Sir Crusader,” said he to De Verac, “your goodly mien and armour of price show you to be of high lineage.” —“This is the only selvaggio who hath spoken to the purpose yet,” said De Verac. —“Wherefore, if you deal truly with us in this matter, and tell us the numbers, purpose, and array of the Crusaders, we will hold you to ransom; but an’ ye will not, know that your life is merely jeopardized; and who is he that shall deliver you out of our hands?”

“Here’s a goodly catechising!” quoth the knight, in high disdain: “shall tissue be bound to answer frieze, and the jewelled barret courtesy to the woollen cap. I tell thee, vile churl, I scorn to parley with thee, wast

thou robed in goat-skins with the hair outward."

"Why, thou thing of velvet and feathers!" exclaimed Mattathias, fiercely, "thou mere fardel of an Italian pedlar, an' thou art not conformable, I will be myself thy tailor, and take measure of thee with this club, in such sort that thou shalt think the devil is broke loose:—thy doublet shall be slashed after a fashion of mine own devising;—the trunk pinked, not with needles, but with lances and arrows;—thy vest shall be seamed from collar to girdle by a curious two-handed sword;—and thy skin left hanging in slips about thee, like the points that truss thy hose withal."

"Send a thousand arrows through me, base churls!" said the gallant-minded coxcomb, "even the whole ammunition of your rascaille band, and then despair to hear aught from me but the defiance and disdain I utter now."

Here he attempted once more to fling himself into a graceful attitude; but feeling

the pressure of the cords, exclaimed in the double anguish of pain and mortified vanity, "Curse thee, peasant! undo me these cords: their damnable ligatures will not let me even die like a gentleman."

"Thou hast come to us, like Agag, delicately, and like Agag shalt thou perish," said the fierce warrior, raising his club.

"Oh, spare him!" cried Genevieve—"spare the gallant knight!—alas, for pity! Must he die for valour and good faith?"

"I do perceive," said Verac to himself, "that this heretic damsel hath a glimmering—as it were, a small light of discretion."

Mattathias suspended his blow, not at her entreaty, but at the uproar in another part of the cave, where a similar conference between Boanerges and Sémonville was just arriving at a similar conclusion.

"Dolt-headed and unnurtured lord!" said the indignant preacher, "a club may convince thy skull; but it were vain boasting to say it could beat thy brains out."

"There's a jest!" said the literal De

Semonville; "as if a man's brains were to be found any where but in his skull, I trow; —but all's one for that. You have despoiled me of mine armour, and pinioned me here, as men truss a capon for my lady's trencher; and if you beat my brains out, I would you would know I ever valued them the least of my possessings. Here's goodly handling of a noble by a villain peasant!"

"Better than thy meed, thou railing Rabshakeh!" retorted the preacher: "what usage had we met at thy hands, had we fallen into them? When did thou and thy godless companions spare the life of an Albigeois?"

"And reason good," quoth the knight. "Why, thou puzzle-headed knave! is there no difference atween us? Are not we sons of Holy Church, and ye vile heretics, whom we are licensed to slay, abolish, and demolish when need serves, and on lawful occasions? What! hast no sense?—canst not make a difference? with a pestilence to thee!"

Another pleading shriek from Genevieve.

withheld the arm of Boanerges. "Oh, harm him not!" she cried; "shed not the blood of the helpless and the prisoner!"

"Mass!" said De Verac: "the light of the damsel's discretion is marvellously in the wane, when she pleads for such an ass as De Semonville."

"Maiden," said Mattathias, "thou hast no part in this matter. Befits it thee to mix in the council of the saints, or the deeds of warriors? Did Saul's daughter strive with the prophet when he smote the Amalekite?"

"Alas, no!" said Genevieve, timidly retreating; "but she saved the life of David, when Saul sent men to slay him."

"We waste time," said Arnaud, "with these foolish knights."—"I knew they would call me a fool," said Semonville: "it is passing strange how all men find out that, as if I had ever told them of it."—"They know not the deliverance that hath been wrought for us: take them forth and let them behold the armies of the faithful covering the mountains, and then they will

gladly ransom life and safety at the price we name."

The prisoners were then rudely thrust to the entrance of the cave and bid to lift up their eyes and behold.

"Look forth," said Mattathias, "look forth, behold Israel is come up by tribes unto the battle, and the Canaanite shall perish out of the land."

"Look forth," repeated Boanerges, "for behold the mountains are covered with chariots and with horses of fire, like that vision of Elijah in Dothan."

The prisoners beheld the full array of the army of Count Raymond. "Woe, woe to you, clear and gallant spirits," cried De Verac, in the anguish of sudden conviction; "ye have perilled your lives and honour in vain. Some hundred armed knights against a host, and led by Raymond of Toulouse! Oh, for the men at arms that are slumbering within the fatal towers of Courtenaye!"—"What sayest thou?" said Arnaud. "It boots not to ask," said Matta-

thias, who drank in the unguarded exclamation with ear and soul; "still less may it boot delaying: saddle me a swift horse that I may suddenly bear the tidings to Count Raymond. Thou wilt go with me, brother Boanerges?"—"Of a surety I will," answered he:—"such tidings must not cool by the way."—"I will also go with you," said Arnaud, seizing on the horse of Semonville; "peradventure ye have taken up this matter unadvisedly."

Mattathias returned no answer, and the party were setting off at full speed when the deacon, who had discussed his kid, seized the stirrup of Mattathias, exclaiming, "And who is to guard the prisoners?"—"Thou, if thou wilt," said Mattathias, flinging him off: "what, are they not bound, and hath not the door of the cave a bolt and staple? Away to thy ward, Sir deacon, and I pray thee surfeit not thy prisoners by a too plentiful share of thy prize"—and he galloped off.

"I warrant thee for that," said the deacon, looking after them: "they shall not have

a morsel to comfort their hearts—not a morsel. In, in; ye have heard your sentence, ye erring knights; look for no refreshment but the sweet word in season, which shall be administered to you abundantly.”

“Spare us thy cursed chattering,” said De Verac, “and we will hold all privation light.” “I would I had the golden legend here,” said Semonville, “or, indeed, any book of riddles; I never skilled to read, but my old tutor, who was a Benedictine monk, made me commit many of them to memory, and methinks to knock a hard text or a *l’envoy* about his head, would give me a huge delight.”

“In, in, I say,” cried the deacon, in all the pride of authority: “ye will not linger thus at the gates of Lucifer.”—“How should we,” said De Verac, “seeing we shall have so apt a porter as thou art? By the mass, this cursed door was made for the entrance only of shaveling hermits or hooded peasants. Nay, there be uses in calamity—had I my plumed cap of maintenance on, I must be fain to enter on all fours.”

CHAPTER VI.

I keep good meat at home, knave ;—

• • • • •

Yes, Sir, I will not fail you all next week.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER's *Women Pleased*.

IT was with terror that Genevieve saw the prisoners committed to such a hold and such a warder. They were both in the full vigour of their strength, their friends were perhaps approaching even if they were unable to liberate themselves, and their only guards were the aged and feeble Pierre, a young maiden, and the deacon, who, exclusive of his infirmity, was never suspected of carrying his courage to any dangerous extremity. From the disconsolate demeanour of the knights there was not, indeed, much to be apprehended. They sat gloomily down on a rude bench

of stone, where their bound arms, drooping heads, and *dos-à-dos* position, made each resemble the figure of the *tristis captivus in arcu* in an old Roman triumph.

“So here we are,” said De Verac dolefully, “like a pair of birds trussed for these cannibals. Men say, the filthy knaves stick not to eat horse-flesh, and even ass-flesh; what then may'st *thou* expect, De Semonville?” —“If they devour me,” said his companion, “never trust me an' I do not make shift to stick in their throats, let them take it how they will.” —“Instead of lying at peace on thy blazoned monument in effigy, thy feet resting on a greyhound, thy shield by thy side, and thy hands joined in a fashion as if thou wert praying, heralds blazoning thy 'scutcheon, priests singing mass, clerks penning goodly epitaphs” —

“There thou touchest me,” said Semonville, almost weeping; “instead of all this, to be wambling about in the guts of a filthy Albigeois, like a frog in a marsh! Would that the

first morsel of me might choke them, or may I never see mine own castle again!"—"Not a morsel, not a single morsel," repeated the deacon, entering the cave after securing the door inside and out with the best of his care. "Curse thee, slave!" said De Verac, to whom the cupidity of his jailor had suggested a faint hope of deliverance: "Curse thee! dost thou think such mechanical morsels were ever intended for the food of a noble or knight?"—"Slander not my kid," said the deacon, "whose flavour, of a verity, was as delicious as if he had descended from the goats of Nebaioth, or the flocks of Kedar."

"Now if I could get this fool to join me," said De Verac; then raising his voice, "why, thou eldest child of famine and apparent heir of mere emptiness! thou who hast slept in a warren that thou mightest have visions of vermin; and hast given thanks over a second course of flies! who hast surfeited at the mere smell of a cook-shop, and lain drunk two days from winding a pipe of Malvoisie,

at the distance of a league ! I tell thee thou wouldst fall into a trance at the bare mention of the viands our sumpter-mule carried but last night.”—“Of a surety the good creatures should not be disregarded,” said the deacon, who hearkened with his very mouth ; “and now that I think on’t, what might your stores contain ? ”

“If I could but make this fool understand me now !” said De Verac : “rememberest thou, Semonville, the delicious contents of our”——“Mine,” said De Semonville, “held a piece of marchpane, an agnus, and a charm for the tooth-ache.”——“Thou dreamest or ravest,” said Verac ; “there was a huge nook of pasty, some half-dozen pheasants and partridge——”——“Were they red-legged ?” interrupted the deacon :——“As my lady’s fool in his new hosen,” said De Verac :——“a vast conger with a mane like a war-steed, and a surgeon that the king’s fishmonger rode on up the Seine to Paris, as there was no boat large enough to hold him.”——“May this be

true?" said Mephibosheth.—"Have faith in it, I tell thee, thou unconvinced deacon," answered Verac; "otherwise perish in unbelief, and be damned, like a heretic as thou art, to everlasting hunger."

Semonville, who saw the turn matters were taking, had the sense to hold his tongue. "And may I hope to find these curious viands thou tellest of?"—"Thou wilt find them, that is, if thou make speed; otherwise the Crusaders, or some of thy own vile brethren, will taste of dainty fare ere long."—"I will gird up my loins, and that suddenly," said the deacon, with much trepidation: "foul shame and sin it were if any of the weaker brethren fell into a gin and a snare because of the savoury meats of the wicked. Surely for *them* to taste of the accursed thing in any wise, were exceeding sinful—it were abominable, and not good."—"Peradventure the mule may have strayed a mile or twain into the forest," said Verac; "in such case thou wilt not be slack to follow it."—"Tell me not of miles," said the deacon, "my feet

are as harts' feet, and as a young roe's upon the mountains."

Genevieve, whose terrors increased every moment, now at last feebly and fearfully attempted to detain him. "Can it be," she cried, "that thou art about to depart and desert us in this strait? Alas! how will you answer for your charge, left in the hands of a feeble maiden and a weak old man?"—"Woman," answered the deacon, "why troublest thou me? Are they not bound, and hath not the door a bolt? I tell thee, inasmuch as lyeth in me, shall the weaker brethren be saved from the snare, even though I devoured the viands myself; yea, all of them, or hid them secretly beneath in the earth."—"The fiend fly away with thee for a dissembling glutton!" said Verac, as the deacon departed;—"and thou," to Semonville, "couldst not aid me by a word to uphold his humour of luxury?"—"By holy Mary," answered the other, "thou didst utter forth such enormous lies about a sturgeon riding on the king of France and I

know not what, that at first I deemed thou wast crazed ; and I promise thee I never much affected lies, except they were told in the way of honesty, as lies should always be.” —“ Hush!—and to our task.”

The last sound of the deacon's halting steps was no sooner heard, than the knights began to apply the ropes with which their hands were bound to a sharp projection of the rock that was near them, and to try and cut them by the friction. For some time their industry was more painful than profitable, and their hands were stripped of skin and streamed with blood before a single rope gave way. At length knot after knot yielded, and the ropes began to hang in shreds about their wrists.

Genevieve saw it, and comprehended the extremity of her danger ; but terror, instead of paralyzing her strong mind, only stimulated it, and the very approach of peril suggested to her the means of escaping from it, and making a friend of the exigency.

Amand, whose romanceful wanderings had made him acquainted with every cave in the

hills of Languedoc, had availed himself of his short stay to point out to her that in case of danger there was a funnel or narrow passage winding upward through the rock right over where the hermit had lighted his fire of dried leaves. She now turned her eyes on it, and prepared to speak: "Noble knights," said she, in a faltering voice, "I see your purpose, and vain were it for a feeble maiden to say she could resist it. It is easy to cut the ropes that bind you, and easier to break through that shattered door; but as you value your lives, risk them not in such desperate purpose."

"What says the heretic damsel?" asked Semonville, tugging hard at his manacles.—

"By heaven, I know not," said Verac, "but never did I hear such a silvery and lute-toned voice breathe from plebeian lips: I am rapt in listening, and am in sooth as one—" "Heed not now what thou art *as*," said the other, "but what thou *art* indeed:—say on, damsel;—the devil himself must have knit this knot."—"I say," said

Genevieve, her courage rising with her fears, “that a thousand lances will be aimed at the breast of him who dares present it at that threshold; and should you by miracle escape to the hills, ten thousand arrows, from bows that never failed, will pursue your flight, and nail you to the earth. There are, indeed, means of safe and secret escape, but they are known to me alone; nor will I sell the knowledge for nought.” “Show us the means, and thou shalt find us no niggards for the nonce,” quoth Semonville.—“I do note some lineaments of likelihood in the damsel,” said Verac; “some touches of love’s pencil, toys of Cytherea, and odd remnants of the Graces; that is, an’ her hood were better set, and her loose exorbitant locks were submissive to the hot rebuke and tortuous discipline of the silver tongs.”—“Oh, heed not me,” said Genevieve, tremblingly eager to withdraw their attention from herself—“think of your valiant lives, your precious moments: there is a path by which you may win the summit of the hill, beyond the reach of fleet arrow or

keen eye; and if I point it out to you, what shall be my guerdon?"—"I will straightway betake myself to it, to prove I am not unthankful," said Semonville; "and, moreover, I will fill thy hood with bezants—that is, when thy people restore me that they have robbed me of."—"Noble knight, I ask no gold," said the maiden timidly.—"Tush, I knew she would 'sdeign thy proffer," said Verac; "thou art fitter to treat for thy ransom with a greedy peasant or gold-gripping Jew, than with a damsel in the vanity of her rustical comeliness: I tell thee, maid, thou shalt have a mantle guarded with vair, a tunic of broidery, and a hood of such quaint and excellent fashion, that all the female heretics of thy party shall be converted, and say their prayers in Latin, *in sæcula sæculorum*, to the utter demolition of heresy!"

Genevieve's look of humble but expressive rejection showed that this gorgeous proffer was as little valued as the other. "In the name of all the devils," said Semonville, "what wouldst thou have, or what art thou?—for

woman thou canst not be, unmoved as thou art by gold or gay attire. So may Marie aid me, if thou be not some spirit of the woods or fairy of the mountains. Look to it, De Verac; she will ask of us anon a drop of blood, or a lock of hair, or something that will merely cost our perdition.”—“Oh no, no!” cried Genevieve, “mistrust me not: I will suddenly point out your way, and ask but for my meed,” uncovering the venerable head of the sleeping Pierre, “that when ye see a head so white as this, or meet a lone and lowly maiden like me, ye will do no despite to the feeble, no dishonour to helpless woman.” “This passes!” said Semonville; the phrase by which he always expressed his sense of whatever exceeded the range of his faculties, or the expansion of his sensibility.

“Fair nymph of the cave,” said the more gentle De Verac, “most polished sylvan, and indeed faithful heretic, doubtless thou art the daughter of a Catholic, and as such my orisons shall be breathed for thee to our lady Venus and saint Cupid.”

“ Breathe orisons for thyself the rather,” said Semonville, to whom Genevieve had indicated the way, and who had begun to ascend, “ for the way seems perilous, dark, and rugged.” De Verac followed, and his voice was soon heard exclaiming, in plaintive accents, as his drapery suffered in the rude ascent—“ Saints and angels, what a rent! mercy, good crag—gently, thou villain briar. By Heaven! the very rocks here are turned heretic, and delight to pierce the raiment of the faithful. I shall seem in this ragged attire like an ape that had run away from a gleeman, and ran wild through the country with his scarlet slops dangling about him.”

“ By the mass, I am stuck,” quoth Semonville, with a groan.

“ Go up.”

“ I cannot.”

“ Come down.”

“ I cannot.”

“ Then let me pass thee, and gain the entrance,” said the more adroit Verac; and,

as he spoke, he sprang upwards, and at one light and vigorous bound reached the aperture. — “What dost thou shout for,” cried Semonville, “thou traitor knight and false brother-in-arms, as if all the devils in hell were in thy throat?” — “The Crusaders,” shouted Verac, forgetting their peril in the enthusiasm caused by their gallant appearance — “the Crusaders: they wind down the mountain like a stream of gold. The great standard of the cross nods and blazes to the noon-day sun: wave all your banners, shout your battle-word, couch your lances, noble knights, valiant Crusaders—*Dieu et l'Eglise*.”

Semonville had now toiled to the entrance, and stood gazing on that gallant sight in despair. “Now Christ them sain and save!” he cried; “for living men they never will win back to the towers of Courtenaye this night:—now hie thee on, Verac, I will not be slack to follow;—perchance we may warn—” “We at least can perish with them,” cried Verac, bounding from the hill-top like a falcon from his stoop.

Him followed the *Sieur de Semonville*, wishing, at every stumble he made, *De Montfort* and his mad counsel at the devil.

“ Safe!” cried *Genevieve*, as she heard the distant voices, and looked on her parent; “ safe! thou from death, and I, perchance, from worse.”

CHAPTER VII.

To turn the rein were sin and shame,—
To fight were wondrous peril :
What would ye do now, Roland Cheyne,
Were ye Glenallan's Earl ?

THE ANTIQUARY.

MATTATHIAS and his party lost no time in making their way to the presence of Count Raymond. As they passed along, they were loudly greeted by the men-at-arms, whose fair array and increasing numbers augmented their confidence, and whose greeting they did not fail to repay by hints that they bore tidings of much moment, such as justified their utmost diligence of speed. They had soon passed the vanguard, and were conducted into the presence of the leader of the host. Count Raymond of Toulouse was

seated on his war-steed, in complete armour from head to foot, in expectation of immediate action; he had neither caused his tent to be pitched, nor even dismounted, since break of day. He was surrounded by knights, all, like him, armed for action, and by preachers and pastors who were vehemently exhorting him to go up against Ramoth-Gilead, and prevail against it; and to whom he listened with the constraint of one who, weary of the importunities of a faction, still feels their influence indispensable. His demeanour was noble and martial; but when he spake, his hesitating voice, broken sentences, and undecided manner, verified the fickle, pliant, and irresolute character which historians have generally ascribed to him. On his brow might be seen traces of past calamities, of recent trials, and of dangers momentarily expected; and he looked, in truth, like one weary of playing the arduous part assigned him in life, but sadly resolved to sustain it with dignity to the close. In early youth he had been a zealous persecutor of the heretics, and sworn friend

to the brother of the Lord of Courtenaye, the father of the lady Isabelle, their unchangeable enemy: he afterwards became the patron of the Albigeois, and then commenced a scene of feudal hostility between the former friends, which ended in the Lord of Courtenaye surprising one of the castles of Count Raymond, and slaughtering his wife and infant children; for this he was rewarded by the King of France with that vast accession of territory which made the lady Isabelle the richest as well as noblest heiress in the land; and for this Count Raymond had deeply sworn against the house of Courtenaye a vengeance he had never yet been empowered to wreak. The rest of his life partook of that vacillating character which had marked its commencement—now making the most abject submissions to the Pope, and now heading an army against the Crusaders—now indignantly opposing the superstitions and the domination of the Church of Rome, —now revolted by the enthusiasm and daring pretensions of the Albigeois:—such was Ray-

mond of Toulouse, firm alone in his purpose of vengeance against the house of Courtenaye; yet was he not without noble and gentle qualities: he possessed valour, and had often proved it; and he had a heart susceptible of strong affections, for he had never ceased to mourn for the wife of his bosom and the children of his youth.

He received Mattathias and his party courteously, and forgot not even to enquire after the pastor Pierre, on the ineffaceable image of whose simplicity and sanctity of character his wearied thoughts reposed delightedly for a moment; but when, in the progress of their communication, they stated that by the intelligence of their prisoners the lives of his enemies were that day in his hand; and Boanerges added (more than he knew) that doubtless the Lord of Courtenaye and his household were among that devoted band, Count Raymond started in his seat and drew his sword; and his horse rearing at the sudden impulse of his rider, gave to the beholders the idea of an equestrian statue bounding

into life by the power of magic. Count Raymond rose upright in his stirrups; his eyes flashed through the bars of his helmet, and, waving his bright sword above his head, he vowed to God not to quit the field that day while a drop of the felon blood of De Courtenaye remained unshed on the earth.

Waving brands and banners afloat, and shouts that rent the air, hailed this declaration; and none was louder in acclamation than Mattathias, who dashed about his club and yelled in an ecstasy of ferocious enthusiasm. "Let us fall upon them!" he cried, "and overtake them; neither turn again till we have destroyed them: let their carcases be as the dust of the plain, and their blood lie like dew on the valley."

"Bring forth my banner!" shouted Count Raymond: "sound all your trumpets, and lift your battle-cry like thunder among the mountains!—*Dieu et l'Evangile!*—we will rush upon them like the avalanche from the precipice, and bury them where they stand!"

“Hold! and hear me—even me!” exclaimed Boanerges, grasping the reins of the plunging and fiery steed—“hear me, I say, that thou quench not the light of Israel.” And as he stood checking the horse and his rider in their might, his head and feet naked, his beard and hairy garments streaming in the wind, while Raymond looked down on him with impatience and doubt, he was no mean image of an ancient prophet, a Micah, or a Jeremiah, withstanding a king of Israel as he made himself ready for battle. “Hath not the Lord delivered them into thy hand? and shall a hair of the head of the meanest of my lord’s servants fall to the ground this day because of them? Tarry till they are inclosed in the valley, where they thought to slay the flock with the shepherd: is it not a place of marshes and springs of water, where the feet of their horses shall stumble and be snared? And when they lie before thee like a wild bull in a net, then shoot out thine arrows and

consume them. Behold I, even I," he cried, exalting his awful voice—"I say unto this people, as Moses said unto the children of Israel when the Egyptians pursued after them, 'Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord this day.'"

"Thy counsel pleaseth me well," said Count Raymond, (as the last counsel he heard was always sure to do). "I would not," he added, muttering to himself, "that felon lord had even a chance of flight to save his forfeit life."

The situation of the ground was indeed eminently favourable to the mode of warfare suggested: hills above hills in endless undulation, some shrouded in mist, some sheltered by wood, afforded a thousand points of concealment to the army of the Albigeois, who had possessed themselves of their summits. At the foot of that where Count Raymond and his knights were posted, was a narrow and rocky valley, intersected with many streams, and closed at the extremity by a perpendicular mass of rock.

Here the Albigeois hoped that the Crusaders might direct their course, as the spot closely resembled that where they had retreated the preceding night ;—nor were they deceived in their expectations.

The band of knights, after riding for some space diffusedly, as men in search of pastime, began to approach the valley. With that infatuation which seemed to rule all their counsels and movements that day, they determined, in the very wantonness of their assured success, to feast under the shelter of some rocks during the heat of the day, and play at chess for the lives of the heretics, like Benhadad of yore carousing in his pavilion while his enemies were arraying their battle against him. Tents and tables were quickly spread by the attendants of the Abbot of Normoutier and of the lady Isabelle ; and this delay gave time to the forces of Count Raymond to possess themselves of every vantage-post and point of assault, also to refresh themselves, being weary as men who had marched all night.

The mountains had cast their shadows deep and broad into the valley, when the Crusaders, after placing the lady Isabelle and her attendants on a wooded knoll, and taking their leave with the joyous gestures and shouts of men who were parting to a feast, began to enter the valley. A disposition had been effectually made for their reception. Every summit of the surrounding hills was covered with parties of the Albigeois, screened by thickets or clumps of trees; even the low sides of that rocky valley were hung, wherever the shelter of a crag was interposed, with archers and slingers. A few of the fugitive Albigeois were posted conspicuously on the heights, as if they had just made their escape, so far as to tempt pursuit, by appearing to point out where the rest were concealed.

The Crusaders rushed in a wild, tumultuous train into the valley, descrying a few fugitives on the rocks that enclosed it, and believing the rest had shrunk amid its ca-

verns and cliffs ; disregarding the fractured rocks that formed its bed, and the streams that divided them, and amid which their horses were now up to their haunches, now struggling for a precarious footing amid the stony paths, till they had almost reached its extremity, without discovering an individual, and their progress was checked by that perpendicular mass of rock, against which the foremost rider almost dashed the chevron of his barded steed before he perceived it was an unscalable barrier.

The Albigeois watched their prey in silence : not an archer drew his bow—not a slinger raised his arm—till the last knight had rode into the defile. Then from hill, and cliff, and crag—from every thicket, bush, and almost bough—from front and rear—from flank to flank—down rained the arrow-shower, thicker than the mountain-rain ; and fast came mingled the sling-stones, like hail in a mountain storm : and every shaft had its mark—and every stone left its dint—and the whole assault seemed dealt by invisible

hands ; for not a shout, war-cry, or word issued from the assailants.

The Crusaders, entangled and disarrayed, still were undismayed, believing this a mere desultory attack of the fugitives—the flight of a few spent arrows. All, however, agreed on the immediate expediency of quitting the defile ; and with a wild and derisive, but still joyous shout, they attempted to regain the entrance, and recover the height from which they had descended. It was easier to quit than to regain it. Their array broken—their armour useless—their noble steeds galled, wounded, tormented by the broken and rocky ground ; backing, facing, rearing, and charging on each other—plumes rent—banners torn—shield clashing with shield—housings dyed in blood :—what a different group did they present from that which, but a few moments past, had rushed like a stream into the valley, flooding its rocky banks to their height with a rich tide of gorgeous chivalry ! Meanwhile the archers and slingers gave them not a moment's respite ; and when they had

at length struggled out of the valley, the men-at-arms came rushing from the hills on every side like mountain torrents.

"We are betrayed!" said Sir Paladour, riding up to De Montfort: "there needs swift counsel in this strait. Let some one be despatched to the Castle of Courtenaye, who may show of our perilous estate, and summon the men-at-arms to our aid without delay."

"I will do your message full gladly," said the Abbot of Normoutier, who rode up panting with fatigue and fear. "In evil hour did I ever ride with armed knights."

"Haste then, lord abbot," said Paladour: "and as thou goest, I charge thee seek the lady Isabelle, and convey her in safety to the castle; and tell her that her knight——"

"Nay, I will be no bearer of love-token or tidings," said the abbot, darting his spurs into his steed: "is this a time for such fooleries?"

"Craven priest!" said De Montfort, who saw only this action: "is it thus thou flyest?"

Here comes a churchman of another mettle," as the Bishop of Toulouse rode up to them.

"How now, my lord of Montfort?" cried the bishop: "how deem you now of the warning of last night? Do you still hold it a shallow and inefficient toy? That 'Beware!' had we marked it in time, had saved this day the noblest blood in France from washing the feet of base churls."

"My lord of Toulouse," said De Montfort, "I would at this season that you would thrust me through with your lance in earnest rather than with your bitter taunts in jest; for I perceive that I have this day brought evil on the valiantest knights in Christendom; whereof, I make a vow to Christ's Mother, it repenteth me sore, so that my heart is nigh to burst mine harness for shame and agony of spirit."

"Now foul befall the tongue that reproaches thee in an hour like this, noble De Montfort!" said the generous Paladour; "for surely it was the noble heat of a true

valour that lighted the flame that must consume us this day. So may my soul see Paradise, as it pants not to part in nobler company than thine!" De Montfort wrung his hand in proud agony, while a tear was seen to start through the bars of his helmet. With that Sir Aymer, his armour hacked and pierced, his face disfigured by a frightful wound which laid his jaw bare, flew past them like a flash of lightning, borne away by his steed, whom he could no longer rein, and who was maddening with the pain of two arrows that quivered in his bloody flank. As the knight passed like a spectre, he shook his hand, streaming with blood, at De Montfort, and exclaiming, "Lo! the issue of your mad counsel!" was borne from their sight.

This spectacle opened the mouths of the Crusaders, who now came gathering round De Montfort. "*Thou* the champion of the Church!" cried one; "lo, into what plight thou hast brought her champions!"—"Doff thy helmet for shame," said another, "and

borrow a coxcomb."—"Is this the noble chase," cried a third, "thou vauntedst of? Methinks the quarry stands at fearful bay."

De Montfort, as they thus assailed him, turned from one to the other with the fury of a baited bull on the dogs that are tearing him; then fiercely exclaiming, "I can bear your reproaches, but not mine own!" he tore the standard of the Cross from the bearer, and rushing right forward on the advancing body of the Albigeois, flung it with all his force among them, and plunged desperately after it. He sunk like a diver into the ocean; and a fearful space elapsed before the plume of his helmet was again visible.

"The standard of the Cross in peril!" cried Paladour: "no, by good Heaven! while an arm is left to win it. Who dreads shame more than death, follow me!" The spirit of the Crusaders rekindled as he spoke, and all prepared to follow him.

Paladour paused as he put his lance in rest, and addressing Amirald, "Dear knight and brother," he said, "we haste to our last

field : valour itself is fruitless here. Should it be my fate to fall first, stay not to bestride me ; but bear this token, dipped in my blood, to the lady Isabelle, and say to her, he who wore it prized it more than life, and felt nought so bitter in death as the pang with which he resigned it."

" Courage ! valiant knight and brother !" answered Amirald : " we shall yet see many a field ; and the peril of this day shall be a theme for mirth in many a winter evening's talk ;—but should it fall otherwise, I will be a loyal messenger to the lady of thy love." As he spoke, a stone from a sling, as if aimed by the arm of a giant, smote him on the head, shattering the cheeks of his strong helmet,—and he rolled in blood beneath his horse's feet.

The flight of the Abbot of Normoutier, with his ecclesiastical attendants, was not unnoticed by a party who were stationed on an adjacent eminence.

" Draw, Mattathias !—draw thy bow !" cried Boanerges. " There speeds a missive

to the lord of Courtenaye; and if he reach the castle ere the shadows fall, the children of Belial will come up against us as the sand of the sea-shore for multitude, and Israel shall be swallowed up quick of his enemies before the sun goes down."

"Send not an arrow after him," said the milder Arnaud; "he is a churchman, and of noble blood."

The strong arrow of Mattathias whistled past him as he spoke; it passed through the body of the abbot's cross-bearer, who fell dead on the earth, the splendid ensign prostrated beside him.

"Another!" cried Boanerges—"a fleeter, and a surer. Lo where he flies with the rags of Rome fluttering around him. Speed to the South, false priest, and bid thy lord the Pope send forth his vassals the kings of earth to thine aid."

Another arrow flew from the ready bow of Mattathias, who stamped and ground his teeth for very rage as another of the attendants lay levelled beside the abbot's rein; who

grasping the mane of his steed, and striking his spurs to the rowel-head, galloped on without a mortuary prayer for his followers' souls.

“When have I seen thee fail thus?” said Boanerges. “Did not a man draw a bow at a venture and smite the king of Israel through the joints of the harness that he died?”

In the fury of disappointment Mattathias bent his bow, and aimed an arrow at the air; it flew not erring. At that moment the maddening steed of Sir Aymer bore his rider like lightning in the course the abbot had taken. The shaft struck the shoulder of Sir Aymer, whose horse fell dead under him as he rode. The old knight sunk stunned on the earth. With a feeble hand he unlaced his battered helmet to gasp for air, and stretched forth the other weakly, as if to feel for his dead steed; the hand at last rested on the bloody and heaving flank, and he withdrew it. “Mad knights—a mad enterprise—a mad world”—murmured Sir Aymer;—“and to perish thus!—done to death by vile peasants: it had been better—no matter *now*.

—And is this death?" he said, in a state between delirium and that tendency to deep reflection which the approach of death produces in the hardest and lightest minds;—"the huge mountains dance around me like atoms; it is time for me to die when all Nature is departing." A short trance overwhelmed his senses; he recovered from it in spasms of deadly sickness. "Would I could shape a prayer, or weave my mind into a saintly frame! It is wondrous how lightly I deem now of that matter of controversy for which I have been perilling life all my days, and at length have lost it. I shall soon know all—more than man can tell. The battle wanes," he murmured, as his senses failed;—"I hear no shout, no clashing of arms. Is the field lost? Courage!"—his voice growing fainter; "Sir Aymer, to the rescue!—but it grows dark;—be sure you wake me by dawn;—we must fight again." A heavy trance fell on him as he struggled to rise—in vain.

The desperate valour of the Crusaders had “with many an inroad gored” the array of the enemy, and spread such panic, that for a space around them the field was for a moment cleared—the men-at-arms retreating on every side, and Count Raymond and his knights, sure ultimately of the field, fighting far aloof. The Bishop of Toulouse had from the first conceived the hope of effecting his escape from this desperate field, neither from cowardice nor indifference to the event, but from that ambitious selfishness that made him rate his own safety at a price above that of half his species; and he now attempted to realize it by the exertion of a strength and courage more than human: he clave his way right onward, every stroke of his battle-axe laying a foeman prostrate; while his war-steed, well trained to bite with tooth and trample with hoof, tore and trod out the small remains of life in those who fell—so the rider and horse passed on like the pale steed and him who bestrides it, having commission to

slay, themselves invulnerable. But De Montfort and Enguerrand de Vitry, his brother in arms, dealt round their blows with blind and reckless fury, making havoc of others without thought of their own safety : now unhorsed and fighting on foot—now mounted again and discharging blows to right and left, the very wind of whose impulse was enough to fell a man of ordinary strength ; their plumes and pennons appearing in the stream of fight like sails of gallant barks vainly contending with the might of a thousand waves. But ever Sir Paladour rode round the prostrate body of Amirald, whom there was neither squire nor page to bear from the field ; and when the foe, daunted, retired to a distance, he spurred his steed, and, wheeling in short and fiery circles, mowed down all within the reach of his sword, and then returned to guard the body of his friend, defending both with his shield from the shower of arrows that fell around them, and rested not.

It was towards night, the shadows of

which were deepened by the darkness of the surrounding hills, when De Montfort and his companion, wiping their brows with their bloody gauntlets, sat down amid a heap of maimed trunks and severed limbs, as two wearied woodmen sit down after the toils of the day amid the trunks and branches of a forest of felled trees, and looked round them to spy for succour while light yet remained in the sky. The towering form of the Bishop of Toulouse was still seen dimly on the verge of battle smiting with unabated force, but far distant from them. They saw Paladour also ; but, could even shout or bugle-sound reach him where he stood, they knew him too strict an observer of the laws of chivalry to quit the body of his brother in arms. Of the other knights, all were slain, or had deserted the field. They saw not where De Verac and Semonville, who had easily found steeds and armour on the field, still shouted their war-cry, though too late for all but danger and death, and still did the devoir of gallant

knights in such guise as might well redeem the foppery of the one and the sullen dulness of the other. There was a form they had beheld before, but knew not who he might be : it was a knight in black armour, who had late in the battle joined them and done valiant deeds ;—but he seemed to fly from one part of the field to the other with a speed that prevented their either demanding his name or deriving hope from his succour. The arrows now fell in a slackened shower, the shouts came more distant, and this singular figure became more conspicuous from the increased desertion of the field.

“ There come no succours from the Castle of Courtenaye,” said Enguerrand De Vitry, turning his dim eyes sadly westward :—“ the lord abbot hath been slain or taken, and we are left alone — to perish. The shadows lengthen as our term of hope and life waxes shorter.”

“ Enguerrand De Vitry,” said De Montfort, “ thou knowest I am not superstitious ;

and how I have borne me this day in the bloodiest field I think knight hath ever fought in, thou knowest well, and wilt report at need ; but, I tell thee, I cannot shake off the heavy presage that weighs down my spirits when I behold yon knight in black armour ; I deem him of no earthly frame or mould. Be confirmed that our death's-day is come, and that he comes a messenger from Heaven or hell to tell us so."

Enguerrand endeavoured to cheer his friend ; but at this moment the black knight rode by them like a storm, his horse's feet scattering splintered armour and lopped limbs like leaves in a gale ; and he shouted, " Linger ye here while your task is unfinished,—your destiny unfulfilled ? Follow !—follow me !"

De Montfort braced his helmet and grasped his lance once more at these words ; and his companion could see by the twilight that the flushed and sanguine hue of his countenance was exchanged for an ashy paleness : he had but short time for observation.

Count Raymond and his knights came rushing from the hills like a flood, and surrounded them on every side. Enguerrand was the first to fall, and De Montfort after a few desperate blows, every one of which cost the life of an assailant, was struck from his horse, under whose feet he fell so trampled and defaced, that the Albigeois vainly sought to recognize his body among the slain.

Sir Paladour remained last on the field; for De Verac and Semonville, deeming all lost, had taken flight in hope of succouring the lady Isabelle. He looked around him, and saw no one living on the field but himself. The short twilight was past; the bright stars came forth above his head; the mountains, with their sharp and ridged lines, stood strongly defined in the deep dark blue of an autumnal sky. The night-breeze that fanned his burning forehead congealed the blood on his wounds, whose pain became intense; and the sound of a thousand streams, that seemed to his fevered perceptions flowing near him, excited a sensation of thirst almost intolerable.

It was at this moment that his ear was struck by a singular sound,—it was the voice of an idiot, a fool of the Lord of Courtenaye, less than half-witted, but shrewd, gibing, and affectionate withal, whom neither persuasions nor blows could drive back from accompanying the Crusaders that disastrous day. When all was over, he sat him down on the summit of an eminence, and began singing a kind of triumphant song with the most lugubrious aspect imaginable: the words were—

De Montfort shall come from the hills above
And carry all before him—

This song of an idiot, heard amid the awful stillness of departed battle, heard where the valiant, the mighty, the eloquent, and the beautiful were dumb, had a strange meaning and power; but Paladour was no longer able to feel; a deep stupor began to creep over him. The last sensation he had was that of trying to fall so as to hide the body of Amirald, and even in death protect it from spoliation and indignity. The pre-

caution failed; the soiled and broken armour of Paladour offered no temptation to the plunderers, who now began to traverse the field, while Amirald's, who had fallen early in the strife, was still fresh and resplendent. The senseless bodies of the youths were soon torn asunder. The idiot died that night, and his dying song vibrated on the ear of Sir Aymer, who was awaking from his deep and death-like trance. "Ha, ha," said the old knight, rousing with his constitutional laugh, "there be greater fools here than thou.—I marvel that my squire comes not to arm me. God's mother! have I slept all this while, and never drew brand while there was battle so near me? Methought I rode with Crusaders in my dream.—How cold the morning sun is!" he muttered shivering, as the moon rose in pale and midnight glory over that bloody field, and the echoes of the hills resounded with the hymns of the triumphant Albigeois. These "watchers of the night" seemed to take up their song of rejoicing along with the host of Heaven, with those

who have "neither speech nor language, but whose voices are heard among them;" like them they lifted up their voices all that night from hill to hill; and while the rich sounds rolled into the dim and stilled valleys, a pure heart and ear might almost have deemed them the faint and far-descending echo of the inaudible harmonies of heaven.

CHAPTER VIII.

Blount and Fitz-Eustace rested still,
With Lady Clare upon the hill,
On which (for far the day was spent)
The western sun-beams now were bent.

Marmion.

THE lady Isabelle with her attendants had been placed by the Crusaders on an eminence when they set out on that disastrous enterprise, and she had waved her hand and scarf to them as long as Sir Paladour remained in sight. Though compelled to accompany them, she shrank from the sight of slaughter, and ordered her attendants to spread her awning or tent on the side of the hill opposite that by which the knights had descended.

Here reclined on cushions, which her damsels spread on the grass, she lay listening to tales of the Crusaders, among whose praises the maidens who knew how to soothe their

lady's ear, forgot not to reckon highest those of Sir Paladour. Her only attendants were Marguerite, Blanche, and Germonda, two pages, the driver of her horse-litter, and the Monk of Montcalm, whom the Abbot of Normoutier, when inflamed with wine, had vainly pressed to join in the assault. The dame and damsels were stretched at the feet of the lady; the pages and driver were ever and anon climbing to the summit of the hill, to look forth on the field; the Monk of Montcalm stood apart and told his beads till even-song, and then knelt and prayed fervently at a distance. Thus, beneath the silken awning there was a rich foreground of luxurious and reposing beauty; the picturesque habits and eager gestures of the young pages gave character and life to the group; and the thin ascetic form, the pale uplifted eye, and dark garments of the monk, as he knelt beneath the branches of a mighty pine, lent a dark and solemn contrast to the picture.

Evening came on, and the lady at length consented to the petition of her damsels, and

dismissed Germonda to the summit of the hill for tidings which the pages had failed to bring. It has been already told how all communication had been cut off by Count Raymond's army. It is, therefore, no marvel that the first intimation of her danger the lady received was from the cries of her attendant. "Holy heaven!" she cried, "the heretics are increased to tenfold their former number. They are pouring from hill and mountain like a flood."—"Thine eyes are bedazzled by the setting sun," said the lady, half raising herself from her cushions of silk; "screen them with thy hand, and tell me what thou seest."—"I see thousands and tens of thousands pouring down on the Crusaders."—"And were they hundreds of thousands," said the noble maiden, "they will cower like a flock of sparrows when the falcon is abroad. Is not Sir Paladour in the field? How fight they, and what arms do they bear?"—"Alas," said the damsel, wringing her hands, "they fight not with clubs and arrows, but with spear and sword, like armed men; and, as I may guess by plume and ban-

ner, no churl or peasant leads them on, but nobles and knights expert in war."

"Thou ravest," said the lady. "Would they not ere this have sent us tidings, if aught thou tellest of had befallen? Look forth again."—"There comes one who seems to bear tidings by his speed," said the damsel.

The lady Isabelle started from her seat, and leant over the brow of the hill, straining neck and eye to catch a view of the approaching horseman, from whose bearing and speed she and her companions drew such auguries as the distance and the windings of the hills allowed of. The horseman was the Abbot of Normoutier, who had escaped the arrows of Mattathias, and lain perdu amid a thicket till he deemed he could reach the towers of Courtenaye in safety.

"It is the Abbot of Normoutier who rides with good tidings," said Germonda.—"He rides not like the bearer of good tidings," said Blanche; "he seems rather the worn and wearied courier of a discomfited host and a disastrous day."—"What tidings, lord abbot?"

all exclaimed, as he checked his rein on the summit of the hill. "To flight!—to flight!" gasped the abbot;—"fly, lady!—all is lost! the hope of chivalry and of Christendom hath perished on yonder field. One hundred and fifty thousand Albigeois—I counted them every man—have either dropt from the clouds or ascended from hell, and tossed us about like so many tennis-balls over these cursed hills. Valour was a mock, and stout-dealing but child's-play against such numbers. If ever there was a lion in a cope and cowl, as such did I bear me this day; but all would not serve. One Sir Paladour would have had me quit the field to bear a love-message, or some such idle toy; but, I promise you, when I laid hand to brand, my fingers forgot it had ever a sheath."—"Where fights Sir Paladour?" cried Isabelle, starting as from a trance at the name;—"where is De Montfort?—where Sir Aymer?—what are Verac and Semonville doing?—where is the noble cavalcade that heralded me at noon to this fatal spot?—where is Paladour?—oh that

he had come to my aid instead !”—— “ Alas, good youth !” said the abbot ;—“ he bore himself bravely, very indifferently brave ;—then a sort of clubs came clattering on his helmet, and, as near as I could guess, some hundred arrows or so pierced through his mail where we stood together ; he said no more but ‘ Commend me to the lady Isabelle ;’ and there he lay : I bestrode him—but what availed mortal valour ?”——“ What indeed !” said the lady Isabelle, with a sudden and fearful calmness of tone—“ what availed it when Paladour fell ?”

“ Lady, betake thee to flight,” said the abbot, terrified at her looks ;—“ if thou win the towers of Courtenaye ere night, thou wilt be glad woman* ; for the soul of Sir Paladour, trust me, it is half-way to purgatory ere this, and that it halt not there long will be owing to the prayers I put up as I rode.”

“ Hie, noble lady, at thy utmost speed !”

* “ Glad woman” is a phrase of that age.

cried the Monk of Montcalm ; “ the heretics prevail ; the cry of ‘ *Dieu et l’Evangile !* ’ comes loud on the wind.”—(The pages and the maidens gathered round the lady.)—“ Men say the devil, in the likeness of Count Raymond, is in the field,” quoth the abbot ; “ for myself, I value him not a straw ; I bear holy relics about me.” As he spoke, the horses were taken from the litter, and the lady Isabelle placed on the fleetest by her pages. “ Ride up—ride up !” said the abbot ; “ ride up, damsels, by your lady’s rein ; methinks she looks wondrous wan, and skills not to manage her palfrey.”—“ Dear lady and mistress !” cried the attendants, “ what ail you, and wherefore do you not betake yourself to flight ?” —“ Nothing,” said the lady ;—“ I ail nothing :” and a fearful stupor pervading her, she added faintly, “ Lead me—guide me even where you will ;—I know not what I say—I reckon not whither I go.”

At this moment the sharp whizzing of a score of arrows was heard at the foot of the hill, and the shout of ‘ *Dieu et l’Evangile !* ’

made the abbot set spurs to his horse, and the lady's attendants to hurry her off with what speed they might. Germonda and Blanche, springing on their steeds, were not slow to follow; while dame Marguerite, who alone had been neglected in this hurried arrangement, with a spring and talons like those of a wild cat, darted herself, *en croupe*, behind the Abbot of Normoutier as he galloped along, and clung close as a vice to the body of horse and rider. The consternation of the abbot, who imagined that the whole host of Count Raymond were seizing on him, *au derriere*, was beyond all power of description. Demosthenes himself never shouted *ζωγρεῖ* in a louder voice than the abbot continued to exclaim, galloping all the while, "Hold me to ransom!—a bishop's ransom!—a king's!—it shall be paid;—three thousand crowns of gold—the saints shall melt—altar-plate, pix, and chalice—cope, ring, and mitre—abbey-lands and costly missals—six thousand crowns!—on the faith of a churchman—eight thousand!—gripe not so hard! the

crowns are to be wrung out of my purse, not mine intestines.” — “Does the lord abbot deem so hardly of a fair friend?” said the mincing voice of dame Marguerite. — “Fair friend!” quoth the abbot, then first venturing a glance over his shoulder: “fair fiend! — fair succuba! — fair night-mare! — why clingest thou to me, vile hag? An’ I had not thought thou wast a host of devils risen from hell to seize me, I am no true churchman!” — “Uncourtly abbot!” said the lady. — “I tell thee,” said the abbot, interrupting her, “thou or I must quit hold; and when it comes to a question between me and thee in a case of mortal peril, it demands no skill to find the issue: I tell thee, I will stick by my steed.” — “And I will stick by thee,” said the dame, fastening her fangs closer than ever. This movement renewed the abbot’s delirium, and he shouted aloud: “Holy Saints! save and succour me! but this time — this time only, I entreat! — and if ever I draw brand for Holy Church again, take me at my word, and let me be spitted on the arrow of an Albigensis, and

served up for Count Raymond's cannibal supper." So saying, he struck spurs more deeply into his steed, who, mad with his double burthen, galloped on furiously; while dame Marguerite, at each succussion, rose like a tennis-ball from the croup, and sunk again with a motion, of which the celerity bore no imaginable proportion to the grace or satisfaction of the performer. In the end, the *gouvernante's* pertinacity proved more than a match for the abbot's horsemanship: he was left prostrate on the earth; while the dame galloped on *seule*, with the air of a "damsel met in forest wide by knight of Logres or of Lyones."

The abbot, sore dismayed and much agrieved in all his members, was encountered about an hour after by the Monk of Montcalm, who was pacing his way to the Castle of Courtenaye. "Alas! and art thou here, lord abbot?" said the monk.—"Alas, and I am!" quoth the abbot. "I trusted thou hadst been at the Castle of Courtenaye by this."—"So I had trusted myself," said the abbot;

“but thou seest how matters are. A certain fury, or goblin, sent by those heretics, who deal with the devil, and who owed me double spite for the valour I had shewed in the Church’s cause to-day, hath maltreated me as thou seest, and rode away on my horse in a flame of fire. I am bereft of the use of my limbs, and am clean spoiled for farther deeds of chivalry.”—“Nay, it is not so ill with thee, I trust,” said the monk, raising him; and in the effort the abbot appeared suddenly restored to the use of all his limbs, and eagerly proposed seeking the castle with the aid of the monk’s arm. “And how,” said he, gazing—“how didst thou escape, when churchmen were crippled of their limbs, and knights and nobles laid low, by the hands of peasants?—What spell dost thou bear about thee?”—“None,” said the monk, “but our Lady’s grace, and a conscience void of offence. I felt that the most ruthless of those called heretics would not murder one who had been a messenger of peace betwixt you both, and whose spoil would not prove a peasant’s ran-

som. I had nought to lose on earth: in Heaven my hope and hold was, above their reach or thought.”—“I tell thee what,” said the abbot, as he paced softly, leaning on the monk’s arm, towards the castle, “all that thou talkest of—thy not being summoned to heavy and high trials, like me, is merely owing to thy lack of faith—‘*Quos Deus amat, eos castigat.*’ Hadst thou been favoured like me with abundance of that precious grace, thou wouldst have had like me abundant exercise for it; wherefore I counsel thee, out of mere Christian love and brotherly zeal, to redouble thy macerations and abstinences, thy penances and pilgrimages, and, moreover, abate and chastise thy exorbitant spiritual pride, and so thou mayest be favoured with the chance of a crown of martyrdom from the hand of some heretic, which I, thy superior in rank and sanctity, was so near receiving this day.” The humble monk listened, and then suggested the necessity of expedition in their progress. “I tell thee,” quoth the abbot, “when I am occupied in giving

ghostly counsel, I would not wag a jot the faster, were the bell ringing for matins.”—
“ But I hear horsemen on the path behind us.”—“ That alters the case,” said the abbot. “ As thou hast no dread of Crusader or heretic, encounter them boldly ; do thy devoir, as I urged the gallant knights to-day ; while I esconcé me behind this thicket, to assist thee with my prayers, which, having forgot in my overmuch valour to-day, it were foul sin to neglect any longer, when such opportunity offers.” The patient monk stood confounded when the horsemen, riding up, proved to be two wearied and wounded knights. They were Verac and Semionville, who, on horses they had caught, were seeking their way to the castle. The monk proffered to guide them ; and the abbot, as soon as he recognized their voices, sprang nimbly on the croup of the foremost, and, himself taking the guidance of the party, they made what speed they could for the towers of Courtenaye.

In the mean while the lady Isabelle and her

attendants had ridden fast and far, dame Marguerite ramping and galloping in the van, like Burger's Leonora, till a clump of chesnuts stopped their course ; from which a knight in black armour rode forth with courteous demeanour, and, accosting the lady Isabelle, prayed her to pause. " I bear a message from Sir Paladour," he said, " to the Lady of Courtenaye, if she rides in this company."

" Sir knight," said the lady, suddenly rousing herself, " say you that Sir Paladour lives, and that you are the bearer of tidings from him ?"

" True, noble lady : if you will vouchsafe me the hearing."

The lady Isabelle reined up her palfrey ; and the noble air of graceful confidence with which she prepared to listen might have disarmed the heart of mal-intent and treachery itself.

" Mark how she hears the deeds of that Sir Paramount !" quoth Germonda.—" See how she bends in courtesy to the message the stranger bears," replied Blanche.—

“ My velvet tire to a heretic’s woollen hood, if this Paladour yet quarters not his new-won arms with the noblest heiress in France.”

—“ Nothing but the gemmed bracelet from her wrist as the guerdon of such tidings.”—

“ Methinks he bows in return with an uncourtly favour,” said her companion.

The nice ear and fine tact of the lady Isabelle had discovered in the stranger-knight some touches of a rude unnurtured manner: he was profuse of polished language, but seemed to be speaking a conned lesson. But his credentials were not to be disputed: he bore the ring and dagger of Sir Paladour as his tokens. He assured the lady that Sir Paladour lived, though sorely wounded; and sent to implore her, by those pledges, to escape by a secret path (known only to the dark knight) from the pursuit of the Albigensis, who, flushed by victory, were in full chase of the noble heiress of Courtenaye, whom at best they would hold at a queen’s ransom, and who might, perchance, dread worse dealing at their hands.

The message was so rapidly delivered, that the lady Isabelle could scarce comprehend her danger. She hesitated. "Lose not a moment!" said the black knight, seizing her rein. "For Sir Paladour's sake!—for your own!—amid the wounds that fester in his breast to-night, there is not one so agonizing as his fear for thy safety."

"The castle is near," said the lady, pointing to its towers.

"But the cursed heretics have intercepted that course!" cried the knight; "and think, lady, what may be thy fate if thou fall into their hands! I know the safe and secret path by which thou mayest win the castle, without risk from thy pursuers; it lies down this glen;—suffer me to guide thee." And, without waiting for permission, he seized the lady's rein.

They galloped down a steep and rocky descent, the strong arm of the knight sometimes grasping the rein, sometimes holding the lady on her seat: the damsels followed. At the bottom of this descent was a thick grove

of firs. The short twilight was over, and the moon, now risen, threw her cold white gleams on the rock they were descending; while the dark dell at the bottom received and returned not a gleam, and the trees and their foliage seemed to form one mass of solid and impenetrable darkness. The lady paused. "I am safe in the guidance of Sir Paladour's friend?" said she, trembling. The dark knight made no answer but by seizing the rein of the lady's steed, whom he dragged at full gallop till they entered the dell; then applying a bugle-horn to his lips, and winding a low and cautious blast, many men in vizards and dark houplands appeared from among the trees and surrounded the party. The dark knight, seizing the lady Isabelle, placed her on his own steed. She neither shrieked nor resisted, for she had swooned. Her damsels uttered loud outcries; but these were soon hushed by the menaces of the band, and by the rapidity with which they were hurried on, and which soon deprived them of all power of expostulation. Dame Mar-

guerite was treated with less ceremony ; the fellow to whose care she was committed flinging her across his horse, and galloping at speed to keep up with the party that preceded him, till the domains of Courtenaye were left far behind, and the drear prospect of a tract of barren sands and the waves of the Mediterranean beating on them, bounded the view of the fugitives by dawn.

CHAPTER IX.

And there are twenty weak and wearied posts.

SHAKSPEARE'S *Henry the Fourth*.

THE first tidings of the defeat of the Crusaders were borne to the Castle of Courtenaye the following night by Sir Aymer. The lord of the castle was in his hall inspecting the splendid banquet, the warders on the tower strained their eyes through the twilight to catch a glimpse of the expected messenger, and the men-at-arms and military retainers, fretting like caged lions, strode about the courts wild for intelligence, and swearing, had they been there, the news had not slumbered on its way. The slow and solitary tramp of a single rider was heard. The drawbridge went down with clash and jar ;

and beneath the raised portcullis, the fierce visages and warlike garb of the men-at-arms, flared out in the torch-light, borne by the crowding attendants. "What tidings?" cried a hundred voices. A single knight rode in like a spectre through the court till he reached the hall; there dismounting and clanking up to the deis, he sat moodily down, and flinging back his helmet, and disclosing his ghastly wounds, he answered, "Such as ye see, such as ye might expect. Sixty knights to charge six thousand men with that devil from hell, Raymond of Toulouse, at their head. Said I not so? What tidings?—Such as this torn jaw and bloody harness tell. De Montfort is down—Enguerrand de Vitry by this bestrides a corse—the Crusaders are cut off to a man. Amiral's lance will never more be laid in rest, and, by God's mother! all is stark nought.—You have my tidings. Now let me have a chirurgion, or a stoup of wine, I care not how soon—the wine first, ere the rascal leech forbid it, and to qualify as it were the mountain dew I have been fain to swallow to-night, sorely

to the prejudice of mine orthodox lungs, which never imbibed such a heretic draught before."

As the knight thus harangued, casting his eyes round the deserted hall, he inquired for its lord. On the first intelligence of the defeat of the Crusaders, the Lord of Courtenaye in an agony of terror had secured himself in the highest tower of the castle, there surrounded by Thibaud the astrologer, and a few menials. He gave and revoked orders, consulted and cursed the stars in the same breath, and finally would have shut the gates of the castle against the Crusaders, had it not been hinted to him that the first intimation of such hostility or repugnance might be fatal to himself. The repeated sounds of the horn, while the knight's wounds were dressing in a chamber apart, gave intimation of the escape and arrival of more of the Crusaders, and no remonstrances could prevent Sir Aymer from hastening to join them. "I tell thee," said he to the man of medicine, who represented the danger of farther exertion,—“I tell thee most learned leech, thou hast turned me into a

muning with thy salves and bandages already, and if I may not eat and drink, inter me quick at once—preach not to me of cullises and confections!—go cure chickens of the pip, and compound a charm for the tooth-ache, and find out the natural cause why we are cold when it freezes; but think not to cure me with aught but a draught of Malvoisie, and a stirring tale to wash it down,—that's your true *probatum est*." On descending to the hall, however, he found only the Abbot of Normoutier. "How, lord abbot," he cried, "are we the only survivors of this mad adventure?"—"There be also the Bishop of Toulouse, and the knights De Verac, Semonville, and Sir Paladour; but the bishop hath called for writing materials and shut himself up with a priest, meaning to send missives to Rome without delay."

"Then would I not stand in his report as De Montfort will, for the title of champion of the church," said the knight.

"De Verac and Semonville have hied them to their chambers."—"I conceive thee—where

the one will find solace in counting over his feathers and fringes, and the other in cuffing his lacquey till his valour be redeemed in his own opinion."

"Marry, thou guessest well; they are confirmed in their resolve to pursue and redeem the lady Isabelle, who hath disappeared none knows how, save that the story that a spirit must be her bridegroom, hath gained much ground—I heard it long ago; but De Verac hath, in truth, returned to provide fair array on the quest, and Semonville to cuff his squire for misleading on their way:—for Sir Paladour (who rode here for aid to bear the body of Amirald from the field,)—when he heard that the lady Isabelle hath not yet been heard of, he made a vow that he would never return without tidings of her, and rode sadly away, scorning counsel or aidance, though such was the plight of steed and rider that I fear he will not lightly redeem his pledge."

"Now, by the faith and fame of chivalry, done like an enamoured knight and a valorous!—And the lady Isabelle not heard of?—

this storm blows from all points. Ah, gallant Paladour ! thou hadst not gone alone on thy perilous quest, had Amirald's foot held the stirrup still—Amirald," cried the veteran, his stout heart melting within him, and the tears falling fast over his hoary beard—"Amirald, brave and gentle boy, whose heart was as bold as thy favour was gracious, a blight came on a goodly spring when thou wast laid low—these white hairs had been a fitter crop for the grave than thy bright locks of youth—would God I had died for thee, Amirald, my son !"

"Worthy knight," said the abbot, "you have indeed cause to mourn for that youth—and the rather, as at your advanced years the loss must needs be irreparable; youth soon supplies its losses, but this misfortune hath befallen you when your body is enfeebled, your intellectuals weakened, your valour declining, your—"

"Beshrew thee for a comforter," interrupted the knight. "What, talkest thou of age? all mine ancestors were grey in their youth, and

your whoreson rheum is a villainous decayer of the teeth, and wrinkles come a man knows not how or why; but, bating these, what trace, what feature, what semblable proof of age canst thou quote in me? But I see how it is even with thee, thy understanding must be marvellously beclouded, or thou hadst not talked so long without a remnant of false Latin vilely applied. But what uproar have we here? does Hell keep holiday, or are the Albigeois broke loose again?"

The tumult arose from a difference between Verac and Semonville, who were each carrying matters to an extremity that threatened a dissolution of their brothership in arms, as hasty and motiveless as its commencement. On the intelligence that Sir Paladour had set forth, spite of his wounds and weariness, in quest of the lady Isabelle, they had instantly adopted a similar resolution, being no wise deficient in courage, or in that amorous devotion which was the character of the age; nor in that spirit of emulation with a distinguished rival, which is the character of every age.

But though they agreed in their object, they differed widely about the means of pursuing it; Semonville insisting on setting forth instantly, after first giving due correction to Paladour's squire, who had led them astray on their path—and Verac, with equal tenacity, refusing to join in the expedition till certain costly garments he possessed, were well secured in his mails and sure to follow him as he ventured forth in quest of the lady—"for," as he internally said, "the fairest lady on earth may take her chance for thralldom or liberation ere I appear before her but in attire worthy of myself." The noise of their conflict had already reached the hall, where Sir Aymer and the Abbot of Normou-tier, the former in spite of medical prohibition, and the latter in defiance of ecclesiastical rule, were, amid their differences on other points, completely agreed in draining every flaggon on the board, when the parties rushed before them, with an appeal for their counsel—Semonville dragging in the false guide (as he termed him), and Verac calling all the

saints to witness, that never was lady delivered to her own satisfaction, to that of her champion and of Christendom at large, unless he were suitably arrayed for the enterprise.

The decision of those to whom they appealed, was suspended by the sound of a numerous train, unannounced by horn or herald, approaching the hall. This party had arrived late, no trumpet was blown in their van, no name or style proclaimed by har-binger; the warders hesitated whether to lower the drawbridge, and demanded whom they were to admit? "The corse of Simon de Montfort," exclaimed a female voice; "lower your drawbridge on the instant—the palace of King Philip might be proud to receive such guest." The drawbridge was lowered, the train admitted, and the Countess de Montfort, who had arrived too late for the conflict of the Crusaders, but had instantly set forth to seek for her husband's body, appeared preceding the litter on which the body of the champion of the Church, "gored with many a ghastly wound," was extended.—

Verac and Semonville, as she entered the hall, compromised their dispute, and whispered apart. Sir Aymer and the abbot rose (the latter with some difficulty) at the presence of the noble, martial-minded widow. She bowed not, nor looked towards them, while they stood like statues. The body of Count Simon de Montfort was extended on a table. The lady approached, and in deep and speechless anguish flung her arms on his chest—a faint respiration followed—Jane de Montfort started from the body in triumph—"He lives—he lives," she cried; "go, bear the tidings to the Bishop of Toulouse, (I know his purpose well)—tell him that De Montfort lives—the champion of the Church! and that his wife will wear corslet and poise brand herself, ere prince or prelate rob him of his title."

CHAPTER X.

——— Arviragus,

'Thou hadst no sister near the bloody field,
Whose sorrowing search, led by yon orb of night,
Might find thy body, wash with tears thy wounds.

MASON'S *Caractacus*.

COUNT Raymond was not intoxicated with a victory, which he perceived to be owing solely to the temerity of the vanquished. He was aware also, that the first intelligence of the defeat of De Montfort and the knights would bring down the formidable force of their men-at-arms on the Albigeois—a force which, even without efficient leaders or skilful arrangement, threatened peril to the victorious party. Rejecting, therefore, the furious counsel of Mattathias, Boanerges, and their party, who, inebriated with success, urged

him to pursue his course even to the uttermost, and half promised that the sun should stand still on Gibeah, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, till the Lord had given his enemies into his hand, he issued his orders that the whole band should set forth towards the kingdom of Arragon, on his way towards which, he was in hopes of being joined by powerful suocour from Toulouse.

This order was sufficiently grievous to the men-at-arms, who had by forced marches and desperate efforts, arrived at their present post ; and still more so to those they came to relieve. But both were sustained and recruited by a day's interval of refreshment and repose ; by the confidence of victory ; and by that hope of ultimate success, which, extravagant in itself, had that day received appropriate nurture from an event that completely defeated sober calculation, and laid the flower of chivalry at the mercy of the clubs and arrows of a scorned and excommunicated peasantry.

The submission to this order, though

strictly enforced, was marked with more humanity than the manners of that age generally admitted ; the feeble and aged were to depart first, under a strong escort, and seek shelter with their protectors among the mountains ; while the army of Count Raymond covered their retreat, and presented at the same time a formidable front to the enemy, whose pursuit was momentarily expected.

Among the first to submit to this order, though the least able to obey it, were Pierre and his granddaughter. Their progress lay through the field of the late slaughter, still strewn with the bodies of the Crusaders ; and the diversity of the ground, every where broken by rocks, shaded by thickets, or intersected by streams, only rendered the spectacle of the carnage more terrible. To view a vast plain heaped with corpses, to see at once this ocean of the dead, and prepare to wade through, is, perhaps, a less fearful object to the imagination, than to totter along amid darkness and doubt, uncertain whether the next cavern does not echo the groan of

the dying, whether the shade of trees you approach does not wave over the dead, or the stream you tremble to cross is not tinged with the blood of the corse that lies pale and stark on its margin. Such were the feelings of Genevieve as, shuddering, she entered this valley of the shadow of death. Pierre, unable to walk, was supported in the arms of two of his flock; Genevieve followed, upheld by Amand, who trembled more than she did, but from a different cause. The path lay in darkness before them, but, as they passed a thick cluster of chesnuts, a light suddenly burst on their eyes. Count Raymond stood there in complete armour, dismissing his brief war-council; the torches held by his pages, gleamed alternately on the dark foliage of the trees and his polished cuirass and cuisses that shone like silver: round him stood dark forms, and darker visages, tinted by the torch-light, with the glow of fierce passions, and the glare of stern purposes; contrasting the pale and timid group that advanced trembling

at their intrusion, though commanded by duty.

“Who passes there?” said the count, with the quick and eager voice of one to whom suspicion and anxiety had become habitual. The attendants pointed out to him Pierre and Genevieve.

“I know that voice,” said Pierre, “though I must never behold the lips that utter it, in this life.”

Count Raymond recognized the sound, and caught in his mailed grasp the withered hand of the ancient pastor. “This hand pointed my way to life,” he cried, as he asked his benediction.

Of all the barbes or teachers of the Albigois, Count Raymond had confidence in Pierre alone, inspired and justified by the unearthly purity and apostolic simplicity of his spirit, character, and views; and the expression of this confidence was rendered more affecting by recent danger, and solemn from the circumstances of their meeting and the mute farewell which closed it.

"Israelite in whom, indeed, is no guile," murmured Count Raymond, rejoining his band; "I have seen thee, perchance, for the last time, but when shall I behold thy like?" Thus honoured and greeted, the ancient man was borne on, and when they had wound their way through the defile, so fatal to the Crusaders the preceding day, Genevieve, dismissing Amand, prepared to follow Pierre and his attendants.

Their path was now less obstructed by corse and broken armour, but often Genevieve shrank from these objects which their loneliness rendered more ghastly; and she was alarmed by the distant and increasing tumult, which she guessed to proceed from the men-at-arms issuing from the Castle of Courtenaye, whose war-cries, calling on their fallen lords, rang wild and wide among the dark hills.

As grasping at the branches of the larch and fir, and the crags amid whose fissures they sprang, they toiled up their arduous way, a sudden blaze of light flashed on

them, and Genevieve, giving a sign to their guides to pause, gazed fearfully round her for the cause, and at a little distance beheld, under the shade of a gigantic ash-tree, a sad and noble sight. It was a woman, magnificently habited, who sat on the ground with the body of a warrior stretched on her knees. His helmet, gorget, and vant-brace, were off, so that all the lineaments of death were visible in his pallid but still ferocious aspect. Two priests stood by, who appeared too much terrified to pray; there were female attendants, who seemed to suppress their grief from reverence for the lady; and pages in silence held the torches, whose light, falling on the dark grey trunk of the ash-tree, gave a kind of ghastly background to the figures of the group. The lady sat gazing on the body; her hands were clasped on her forehead, and the jewelled bracelets with which her arms were bound, discovered her rank; her face was as pale as that of the warrior, and the silence of her

despair seemed to have awed her attendants into silence also.

“And is it thou?” she said at last, in a voice hoarse and broken—“this livid, cold, helpless thing—is this Simon de Montfort?”—and something between a shriek and a laugh burst from her lips. The women, seeming to take this as a signal, broke into lamentations:

“Hush,” she said, “weep for women or for babes; the warrior and the noble must have the death-groan of a thousand for his dirge.”

The priests then seemed to whisper consolation, or offer masses for the dead; she shook her head. “I knew thy bold spirit well,” she exclaimed, addressing the corse, “and if it retains aught of its former strain, it would joy less in Paradise for a hundred masses than for one war-cry thundered in battle. No, my husband—mine no more—for the tears of women and the prayers of priests, the blood of a thousand churls shall fall for every noble drop of thine, and thy tomb shall be the bravest warrior ever slept in—the bones

of a thousand enemies. So swears the widow of De Montfort, and Christendom shall see her oath fulfilled."

Awe-struck by what she saw and heard, Genevieve attempted to hasten on, when the sound of a low and feeble moaning caught her ear; and near this spot she beheld an Albigeoise supporting her son, a dying youth, on her knees; she, too, was seated on the earth; but there were no attendants, no torches, no gems blazing around the figure of despair and passion. The mother wiped with her kerchief, from time to time, the blood and froth that gathered on the lips of her son, and often pressed her's to them with a brief agony she checked, to catch the hope which the sufferer tried to breathe, or to whisper it when that breath was suspended by pain. Her words betokened more anxiety about the immortal than the mortal part; she spoke, while yet she had hopes of being heard, of the blessed frame in which a believer should depart; she even, with choked voice and bursting heart, reminded him that for-

givenness of wrongs was the first requisite of that frame.

"Ill-fare the battle-axe of the Bishop of Toulouse!" murmured the youth; "it was that which laid me low."—"Is it thus thou forgivest, my child?" said the mother.—"I could forgive them all—but bereaving thee of me: canst thou forgive them that?"—"I must!" said the mother.—"Then, I can," said the boy.

A few moments after, by the motion of his lips (though he could not articulate distinctly) and the tossing of his weak limbs, the mother believed he might wish to say something, which she bent in vain to hear. "Thou wouldst say somewhat," said she very slowly. Speaking with much difficulty and many intervals, the sufferer uttered:—"I—have—given you—sometimes—pain."—"Never till now," said the wretched mother, pressing a corse in her arms—"never, till this moment!"

Genevieve was rushing towards her, when her guides, assuming authority in their

turn, pointed out her way, and urged her vehemently to pursue it. She submitted when she looked at her grandfather; but she could not help exclaiming, "O that my corse may be bedewed with the tears of affection, not with the blood of vengeance!" As she spoke, she attempted to hurry on, till, her feet striking against a piece of armour, she fell; and when she rose with difficulty, perceived that her guides were at a distance, and that she had fallen near the body of a Crusader. The pale light fell full on the object, on which she could not help gazing with more than emotion. The plunderers had already rent away casque and breast-plate; the rest of the splendid armour announced the rank of the fallen warrior; but Genevieve was less struck by these than by the pale features and redundant hair of a youth of eighteen: his forehead was marked by a deep wound, and his white bosom was deeply gored by another. As Genevieve gazed on him, a choked and convulsive breathing announced that life

was not yet quite extinct. Genevieve bent over him involuntarily : the sigh was repeated more audibly ; and grasping at the hope of preserving one human life from the event of that bloody day, she had even the temerity to implore one who approached her, to assist in removing the wounded knight to the shelter of some tree or cave, “ where at least,” she said, “ the mountain-winds would not blow so unpiteously on his untended wounds.” The man, who had only returned to ask why she loitered, sternly refused her request, and demanded would she seek him to aid a Catholic, a “ persecutor and injurious ?” “ Alas !” said the maiden, “ he has no mother to hold his dying head—no noble widow to watch his corse. In the name of Him who *is* mercy, let us be merciful !—aid me to bear him but where he may die unpierced by the chill wind, and unrent by the wolf and the bear ! Alas, for pity !—in these bloody times the voice of war bids men hate each other ; but centuries ago

there was a voice that said, 'Love one another,' and to that voice I rather yield me."

"I doubt thou dost," said the speaker, whose voice betrayed Amand. "And is it thus, Genevieve, I find thee employed?"

"And how camest thou here?" said the startled Genevieve.

"Because I left father and mother to follow thee," said the youth, bursting into an agony of indignant grief: "and would I had died ere I met thee thus!—the corse of a foe is dearer to thee than the life of a friend."

"I answer thee not!" said Genevieve, proud in the purity of her heart: "thou hast refused me thine aid, and I need not thy reproaches."

"Reproaches! No, Genevieve!—nor shalt thou bear the reproach of the congregation through me. The secret of thy wishing to aid one of the accursed shall be kept as it were my own; though, were it told, it would

be a sin against thee and thy father's house to cut them off for ever."

"Do in that as thou wilt," said the maiden, who felt this promise somewhat like a threat : "for me, I am not a Jael to smite, but a Michal to aid in the time of peril and of escape. And weak as mine hands are, they may, in bearing this mangled frame to shelter, do more acceptable deed than the hands of those who laid it low this day." So saying, with her utmost strength she attempted to raise the wounded knight. A cry of pain, and an increased convulsion of the limbs, indicated that she gave only agony, but gave not relief. Amand could not see her straining her slender arms, and sighing as she resigned her helpless burthen without some touch of feeling ; but when at the movement the blood again gushed from the wounds of the tortured youth, Amand forgot all his jealous feelings, and springing to her assistance, the body, with his added strength, was borne to a cave, where the young and graceful form lay pil-

lowed on stone as on a monument, and the thick clusters of the clematis and ivy hung bowering over it, like banners over a grave.

So said Amand, with perchance a sneer at the obsequies of chivalry, which he had been taught to hate and disdain. "And how," he asked, "wilt thou reward me for this toil?"—"With my prayers," answered the maiden, whose heart was lightened by this deed of mercy.—"Nay, a Catholic Beata could pay me with her prayers."—"Then, with my love."—"Ah, but thou lovest Heaven, the pastor—all but me."—"Then with my hand."—"Thy hand!" cried Amand.—"Yes, my hand," said Genevieve, with forced and mournful gaiety; "and give me thine in return to aid me to climb this steep; in sooth I cannot, without thy assistance—and it is to follow my father—and I am very weary. Nay," she added, straining her exhausted spirits to soothe his sullen mood—"Nay, frown not, Amand; would knight of chivalry refuse such favour from his lady?—and wilt thou reject mine?" He assisted

her in silence to ascend the steep; but the pressure with which he wrung her hand when she reached the summit, and the look he cast on her, visible even amid the darkness from its fierce intensity of expression, made her tremble. She knew not what she had to fear—but still she feared.

CHAPTER XI.

——— What if it lead you to the cliff,
And there assume some other horrible form,
That may deprive your sovereignty of reason.

Hamlet.

SIR Paladour set forward on his desperate search, mal-content and full of troubled thoughts. At the castle, or from the bands whom he occasionally met, he could obtain no information but that the lady Isabelle had been carried off by some unknown violence; and the Abbot of Normoutier, who might have been enabled to give a more particular account, he had not seen or conferred with. To prick forth alone, without guide or direction, in pursuit of a lady borne off by violence, was in the very spirit of the age, and,

if it had not, would still have been congenial to his daring spirit; but now he felt impelled to it by a wish to escape from a revisiting of those disastrous presages, which never failed to be awakened by the recurrence of recent misfortune.

Riding on, without path or hope, he found himself, towards midnight, on the verge of a heath, whose bounds were lost in darkness; and here, unknowing either region or track, he threw the reins on the neck of his weary horse, and, reckless whither he was borne, sat wrapt in his own dark musings. "Fate will no longer be mistaken!" Thus his thoughts ran. "She deals with me in oracles no longer. Evil befalls all around me,—and the flight of so many arrows shows at whom they are aimed. The lady of my love is the prey of violence!—the friend of my soul falls beside me in battle! This scattering of the leaves foretells speedy autumn. Would that the blast were come, and the despoiled tree were bowed to earth before it!" —"Many a tree in falling crushes the feller!"

said a voice distinctly near him, "and woe to him who lays axe to the root of that for which Heaven is whetting its own. Fear not, Sir Paladour, thou hast seen the goodliest of the forest strewed like willows around thee to-day, but the blast that shall level thy stately stem, is brooding yet in the treasury of heaven's own heaped and hoarded wrath."

Sir Paladour caught up his reins; the steed too, as if by instinct, started and stood sweating and pawing the earth. A form stood near him in shapeless darkness, but the sounds that issued from it rang in the ears of the knight, as those of a voice too well remembered. At any period to have encountered such greeting at midnight and in solitude, would require well-strung nerves. At that in which Paladour lived, it demanded courage almost superhuman. And in this peculiar instance, peculiar resolution was indeed necessary, for he recognized in that dark figure her who had piloted him over the lake, and whom he had afterwards encountered on a more fearful night, in the

vaults of the Castle of Courtenaye. The remembrance of the terrors of that night held him dumb, nor did the figure appear to wish to renew the topic, potent as it was : thus a singular silence was observed between them by a kind of mental and unexpressed compact on the subject of their last meeting, (it was, indeed, never discussed till a much later period,) and each seemed to prepare only for the present encounter.

The knight crossed himself, and repeated his credo and ave before he ventured to look round.

“Thou didst not tremble thus to-day,” said the shape, approaching and almost laying its hand on his rein. “Why tremblest thou at the voice of a being like thyself?”—“Mortal I scarce believe thee,” said the knight, “for when did aught mortal touch me with fear such as I now feel?”—“Yet mortal I am,” answered the voice, “for I suffer, and I come to announce suffering. Lackest thou other proof of my being one of thy own wretched race? Fling all your warn-

ings, voices of the dead, cries heard in the still night, or whispers from the tomb, all that terror has taught, or credulity believed, in one scale, and weigh it against the denunciatory voice of the living, who announces woe and can verify the announcement, and see how the scale inclines."

"In the name of all that is sacred," said the knight, in whose ears the voice of his strange pilot over the lake became more and more distinct, "whence comest thou, and where art thou sped?"—"Whence I come," answered the voice, "I know not; whither I go, I reckon not. But for thee, Paladour, I can tell whence thou comest, and whither thou speedest. Thou comest from a feast where thou wast at once viand and caterer; the feast of war, where fools are food; where life is lavished we know not why, and eternity risked we care not wherefore. Thou comest from fighting against the fools who make pleasure a crime, in the cause of those more desperate fools

who make crime their pleasure. Thou comest from that mart of deadly traffic, where deeds are given in security for words, and he who believes he knows not what, signs the bond of his blind creed with his blood, and dreams that the Almighty will ratify the contract and repay the loss. From such spot thou comest, and thou art hastening where the frail idol of thy earth-bound heart is held by a stronger arm, and kept in cage where thy beak may be blunted, and her gay plumage soiled, ere its wires be broken, and the bird be free."

The knight, overpowered and appalled as he was by her words, caught in the last a hope to which the very fibres of his heart clung; yet, dreading alike to provoke or attempt to soothe one whose malignity seemed so unappeasable, and fearing that his betraying solicitude would be the very means of its defeat, he tried to speak with evasive caution.

“Thou hast truly said why I am here, now tell me as truly wherefore thou art?”—
“To serve thee, to serve thee, doubtless,” she answered; “Oh, wherefore else do I live,” she repeated with a frantic laugh, “but to be thy slave and work out thy purposes at the risk of these miserable remains of withered life and ruined intellect? I tell thee, Paladour, I can point thee to the very spot where the lady of thy love was borne this night.”

The knight shrunk back in horror at the thought that the fate of the lady Isabelle was in the power or even the knowledge of such a being. The female mistook the cause of his emotion.

“And shrinkest thou, Sir knight of the bloody cross? Craven knight! could not one stamp of my foot have overset the bark when I rowed thee on thy way to the Castle of Courtenaye? Could not one breath of my lips bring around thee the heretic warriors, who wander yet on the verge of this heath, and would count thee an acceptable sacrifice to

their vengeance, and call it an offering to the Lord?"—"Cease, accursed hag!" cried the knight; "into the hands of heretics themselves would I fall, rather than into thine."—"Choose thy next guide thyself," said the shape, turning from him. "Nay, hold, hold!" as she rushed away, "hold and turn," he shouted; "I yield me to thy guidance, show me but the path where she hath been borne, the hold where she is constrained—the one I will pursue at my life's dearest peril; the other, were it guarded by fiends, I will assail, were my soul's safety on the issue."—"Life and soul!" said the figure, returning, "a goodly risk, and manfully perilled;" and she strode on with a step rapid, yet light and firm.

They were in a sandy morass, where his guide, who knew the track, bounded from one tenable spot to another with incredible celerity, while the wearied and heavily encumbered steed flounced from moss to mire, and from stone to turf, embarrassing himself and his rider.

“Alight,” said the figure, “and leave thy steed here; he shall be tended. What! afraid again? and of a woman? and yet deep reason hast thou to dread woman,” she said, speaking to herself; “and deeper still hath woman to dread thee; yet fear not her who partakes neither of the weakness of her sex, nor the brutal strength of thine, who has ceased to hope, or fear, or feel; who has no remaining link to bind her to life, save that which throbs with pain—who knows not that she lives but when she feels she suffers.” —“I understand not thy words, nor dare to scan their meaning,” said the knight alighting; “but it never shall be said that fiend, in the form of woman or man, repulsed Paladour from peril or adventure. To our dear Lord’s grace and Mary’s might I commit me in this strait; but I had rather follow the fallen banner of the Cross in ten such fields as were lost this dread and disastrous day, than guide like thee, save in such cause.”

As he spoke, the female began ascending a cliff, that suddenly rose amid the swamp,

with a speed and strength almost miraculous; and the knight, though well nigh exhausted, and encumbered with his heavy armour, followed with a vigour and celerity which he owed partly to a frame that united the most knitted muscular strength with boyish lightness, and partly to an excitement which strung his nerves with preternatural energy. The female, who saw him almost overtake her in the wild bounds and desperate graspings of a track known but to herself, and where no step but his would have dared to follow, seemed from time to time to look back on him with a kind of reluctant admiration. "And must it be so?" she muttered to herself, "so fairly fashioned—so clear and bold a spirit!—See how he bounds from crag to crag—how he grasps at a tuft of withered grass, and, now that it fails, springs upward with the whole strength of his gallant frame! That was the arm that struck the giant De Montfort to the earth in the lists—that was the foot that held its stirrup last in the bloody field—that was the

ample chest from which thundered the war-cry of La Croix Sanglante, when prouder voices were hushed, and more boastful tongues were cold. Welcome; welcome!" she exclaimed, as if priding in her victim, who had toiled to the summit of the cliff; then suddenly turning on him, "Now dash thyself below—leave thy body in ten thousand fragments to be snatched by the vultures, and commit thy soul to heaven! Thou shudderest, but be warned, (I warn thee in mercy,) and follow me no farther."

"I ever deemed thee a fiend, and thine is a fiend's counsel," said the knight, as he stood on the steep, dizzy with toil, famine, and fatigue; "but whither wouldst thou indeed lead me?"—"To thy wish, fool," said the female: "now judge if I give thee not kind counsel to perish rather. She who points a sudden and desperate death to the sufferer, perchance shows him mercy; but she who guides thee to thy wish, guides thee to wretchedness, so bitter, so inevitable, so deadly, that—knit not thy brow, or handle thy brand—

thou hast already determined. One moment's pause of feeling came over *my* heart—one moment of reflection was allowed *thee*—both abused, both lost, there remains but this—now follow me,” and she plunged from the summit of the crag, like an eagle from its eyry. The knight followed more slowly, yet reached the plain almost at the same moment; it was a waste extent of sand interrupted sometimes by rocks, over which the female seemed to glide, ever beckoning her wearied associate to follow. It was now near morning; a pale grey light gleamed on a range of headlands and promontories, broken by deep and sinuous bays full of sands heaped up to a formidable height, and so curved, that the point one seemed to touch with the eye, required a mile's toil to reach. The distant thunder of the breaking surge was heard, but so faintly, that the knight heard distinctly the hissing of the sands under his mailed feet; and this sound so calm and monotonous formed almost a fearful contrast to the deep silence of his guide. Suddenly, his companion springing

on a ledge of rock which rose in their way, and motioning to him to follow, extended her arm towards an object faintly seen in the hazy light, and exclaimed, "There is l'Aigle sur la Roche, the hold of that fierce outlaw who keeps thy lady in thrall." Paladour, straining his sight, could scarce discover a mass of rock that projected far into the sea, and seemed to be terminated land-ward by a morass, thus forming nearly a peninsula. On its summit arose something of which the eye could scarce ascertain whether it were edifice or rock piled on rock, so much did its massive and perpendicular structure seem like a part of the cliff it was perched on. Its aspect was so dreary and formidable, that the knight, as he withdrew his eyes from that unassailable hold, and turned them on his own solitary and unaided person, could not prevent a heavy sigh of despondency bursting from his bosom.

"Yes, yonder is l'Aigle sur la Roche," said his guide, as if answering his thoughts; "and when thou canst win the eagle to drop the

lamb he has pounced on, still despair to rescue the prey from the fangs of the outlaw; and when thou hast caused the Alps to rock to their foundations, then dream of making a pinnacle fall from the battlements of yon tower."—"Then," said the knight, with re-kindled eye, "are those walls doomed to ruin as sure as the light of heaven's sun is rising on them this hour! for never yet did aught perilous or desperate invite me to the encounter unfoiled; nor need I higher assurance of victory, than to hear that my foe is invincible."

At this moment, as he fixed his eagle eyes on the tower, at which already they seemed to take fatal aim, something was seen moving on the summit of the rock, which the distance prevented their distinguishing as human forms; but the next moment the blast of a horn that woke the thousand echoes of the shore, suggested to Paladour the thought, that perhaps at that moment, the lady and her attendants were entering the hold of the outlaw. They were, indeed, the prisoners

whom Adolfo and his band had seized the preceding day, and whom they were now conveying to their fastness.

From the moment of her recovery from the swoon into which her terror had thrown her, the lady Isabelle had in vain supplicated to know in whose power she was, or whither she was to be borne ; her entreaties, aided by the louder cries of her attendants, were heard in silence, and the horsemen pursued their course at full speed, treating their prisoners, however, with all the gentleness their situation rendered possible. Towards midnight, conceiving themselves beyond the reach of pursuit, they slackened their pace, and at length halted in a valley, where, spreading their mantles on the ground, and assisting their prisoners to alight, they invited them with no uncourteous gestures to partake of the refreshments with which they were spread. This was the only interruption to their journey, till by dawn they reached the tower of l'Aigle sur la Roche. After passing the gate, they were conducted into a rude hall, without

windows or any light, except through a narrow slit near the door. The walls were of unhewn stone, and the floor was flagged in compartments to resemble a chess-board. On this some of the band were stretched and playing, as the party entered: their oaths and vociferations were hushed in a moment; they rose and retired respectfully, and the lady and her attendants remained alone with their captors, who stood in silence round them, without either removing their masks, or throwing off their mantles. It seemed as if they knew not how to deal with their prisoners, while the latter stood trembling, not knowing what danger they were to deprecate first, or to whom they were to make their appeal. The lady Isabelle alone struggled to resume that air of insulted dignity, of which fatigue and terror had almost deprived her. Accustomed to command, she considered the expression as equal to the habit, and the assumption of it did for a moment awe the rude and lawless men who surrounded her. At this moment, dame Marguerite, who had collected her

breath, advanced, and with grimaces that seemed to the lady to indicate insanity, welcomed her to *her* castle, lamented the hardships of her rapid journey, and assured her that her reception should be worthy of the noble knight, her bridegroom, who——Here dame Marguerite, on a sign from the principal of the band, was borne in a moment from the hall; while after a pause he advanced with an air of embarrassment, and, pointing towards a narrow door at the extremity of the hall, seemed to intimate his wish that she should ascend a staircase of stone on which it opened. The lady, who saw she could not choose but obey, cast a look of agony round her, but, perceiving that her damsels were permitted to follow, began to ascend, declining all proffer of assistance from the dark knight, which the steepness of the stair seemed to require, while its narrowness rendered the ascent of more than one at a time impossible. Thus, with steps whose falterings she tried to conceal, and with a heart whose tremblings she scorned to betray,

the noble beauty, wrapt in her veil, ascended the stairs in silence, rejecting all aid, but ever casting a watchful wistful look on her damsels, who followed close behind.

The tower of l'Aigle sur la Roche, built by a predatory baron of the preceding century, rose eight stories from the rock in which its foundations were sunk, and which was impregnable to any mode of assault known in those days. Each story contained a large square apartment roofed and floored with stone, and furnished with small recesses, hollowed in the solid walls, of various shapes, some wholly dark, some lighted only by a loop-hole. The apartment on the ground-floor was a kind of guard-room; that above it, a rude banquet-room; the recesses, or niches rather in both, serving the banditti for the purpose of sleeping in. The upper apartments were occupied as armouries or store-rooms for plunder; but the topmost had been formerly fitted up with some care for the favourite of the lawless man who built the tower, and was the only apartment in the whole

structure that could boast of a window, or rather casement, whose stanchion of stone and shattered panes seemed rather to tell of the comfort and elegance it was intended once to bestow, than to afford either now. All these apartments communicated by a spiral staircase of stone, whose only level landing-place opened on this apartment, while a few ascending steps led to a bartizan, from whence the piercing eye of the outlaw could discern (it was said for miles) his prey, land and sea, and arm his band or man his bark to seize whatever spoil either element might afford. It was to this apartment the lady Isabelle ascended, and it was evident that it had been furnished for her reception with a kind of rude and hasty splendour. Tapestry was hung on the walls by wooden pegs stuck between the interstices of the stones, but in many places those walls of ragged stone were totally bare. A vast wood-fire blazed on the hearth, and a lamp, suspended by a soiled and tarnished chain from the raftered roof, hung swinging to and fro as if but re-

cently placed there. The bed, with its silken canopy, was worthy the chamber of a princess, but there was an incongruity, a want of appointment in the chamber, which, with all its coarse and lavish display of splendour, reminded its unfortunate visitor too strongly of the well-regulated magnificence of her bower in the Castle of Courtenaye. The damsels, too, shuddered when they observed there was not in the apartment, either a vessel for holy water, a crucifix, or an image of the Virgin. The outlaw, after pointing the lady to a bench covered with tapestry, and placing before her a trivet covered with refreshments and costly wines, and by gestures inviting her to partake of them, retired.

The lady Isabelle, who had continued speechless from terror, indignation, and the nameless dread of what their expression might expose her to, if she opened her lips, sat in silence for some moments after he had departed; then rising, as with an instinctive movement, she approached the casement, and flinging it open, gazed with fearful earnestness

on the prospect below. The tower here rose perpendicularly from the rock ; two hundred feet below its foundations the waves of the Mediterranean were beating the rock, which, rushing out into a promontory, increased the agitation of the waves, that roared like exhausted thunder at its base, and tortured by the crags and cavities, tossed their spray, like the bound of sea-monsters, to a terrific height on the terraces into which the rock had been hewn for the accommodation of the outlaw's men. The lady Isabelle looked down in dizzy terror on a sight she had never before beheld, an inscaleable rock, and the ocean in fury foaming at its base. She closed the casement, and, turning from it, advanced a few steps into the apartment. She spoke not, but despair was in her features. Her damsels, who had watched her looks, now flung themselves at her feet, and grasping her robes, as if for protection, burst into those wild expressions of grief, which reverence for their lady, and hope derived from her, had hitherto suppressed.

The noble maiden, at this sight, felt her long-sustained courage and high-wrought spirit fail, and, after vainly pressing her hands on her bosom, as if to aid her painful respiration, she burst into an agony of tears.

CHAPTER XII.

I will marry her, sir, at your request; and though there be no great love in the beginning, yet heaven may decrease it on more acquaintance.

SHAKESPEARE'S *Merry Wives of Windsor*.

IN the mean time, the other apartments in the tower were filled with their various occupants, all intent on their own pursuits. The bandits had retired to calculate on the princely ransom of the heiress — Adolfo to drink with his comrade — and dame Marguerite had been at an early period of her arrival borne off to another apartment by one of the band, to whom Adolfo had given a sign. This apartment was no better than one of the recesses we have before mentioned; its form was that of an acute angle, of which the vertex ended in a loop-hole not more than six

inches wide, but being *bevilled* inwards, the immense thickness of the wall allowed it to effuse more light through the recess than its narrow aperture promised, but that light fell only on rugged walls, a stone bench, and an ill-carved image, which was once intended for a crucifix. On this stone-bench was dame Marguerite seated perforce, and pouring forth loud reproaches against her uncourteous conductor. "My lord," said the bandit, who had his lesson, "requires that all this be received and understood as the testimony of his infinite respect for the virtuous and discreet Marguerite."

"Respect me no respects!" cried the gouvernante: "respect hath flung me across a horse, as a miller's boy would a sack of flour—respect hath shaken mine entrails to a jelly—respect hath dislocated every joint in my frame—respect hath rent my veil and head-gear to rags—respect hath torn my tunic and skirt in a fashion shameful and piteous to behold—respect hath thrust me into no better than a dog-hole;—and then comes respect to

hope that all is to my liking :—the foul fiend fly away with such respect ! I have been treated with civil rudeness once and again, and have borne, yea, and made civil return, when there was no offence done but such as gentlewomen might and ought to bear with in civility ; but thy respect, knave, I cannot away with.”—“ Perchance all was done in curious delicacy, to prevent the suspicions of the lady Isabelle, who might be jealous of service done to one who so far excels her in beauty.”—“ She was indeed strangely jealous of me,” said dame Marguerite, propitiated by this homage to her incredible folly ; “ and had I not deemed that seeing me preferred by a young and valiant knight would have been a wholesome lesson to her vanity, I had never encountered such trial. Marry, the issue has cost me more than her for whose behoof it was undergone : this is what we get by aiming at the good of others. But, mercy of Heaven ! what place is this they have borne us to ? Where be the fair attendance, the noble knight, the love-suit, and

the gallants waiting? Meseems, this is more like a robber's hold than a knight's castle—more like what I have fearfully heard men tell of l'Aigle sur la Roche, or some haunt of bandits.”—“Nothing can escape thy penetration, sage Marguerite,” said the robber; “thou art indeed in the fastness of that outlaw, whom courtesy forbids me to name, terrible as the sound must be to ears feminine.” The scream uttered by the wretched woman at this disclosure certainly pierced the robber's ears, but had not the same effect on his feelings, for he listened with perfect *sang-froid* to the exclamations that followed, “What! am I betrayed?” shrieked Marguerite. “Did not this Judas appear among the train of the Abbot of Normoutier?—did he not win mine ear with a tale of a noble knight who loved and would make me his bride?—did he not say that he would the lady Isabelle might be there to witness the bridal?—and did I not do him to wit how she might be seized when her attendants were away but yesterday, when the

Crusaders went on their mad course? And is this the reward of my faithfulness and loyal dealing? Where is the castle to receive me? — where is the bridegroom to welcome me? — where is the promise that the lady Isabelle should bow herself before me? An' it had not been to chastise her vanity, as it were, thou hadst never seen me here.” — “The chastisement may not be thrown away, though it hath missed the lady Isabelle for the present,” said the robber: “in the mean time be not discomfited, amiable Marguerite; for, I swear to thee, thou shalt meet thy promised bridegroom to-night, though it be in the walls of l’Aigle sur la Roche.” — “Nay, if I am to meet him to-night,” said the gouvernante, “that mollifies. But, now that I think on it, I am and will be discomfited; I have had nought to breakfast. Send me suddenly a manchet and a cup of pigment, and let the lady Isabelle, or one of her lazy damsels, attend to arrange my coif and veil; else look to it, knave; — and, dost thou hear? tell the knight, my lover, to

cause some tapestry to clothe these walls and cover this unsightly bench of stone ; for of a truth, since my so speedy journey, this seat feels like aught but a bed of roses." The answer of the robber was interrupted by three blasts of a horn, wound at short intervals. Starting at the sound, he hastened to the hall, where Adolfo was, leaving Marguerite to dream of tapestry, pigment, a new coif and tunic, and the lady gazing with envy at her bridal magnificence.

The outlaw was carousing in the hall, or guard-room, with Gerand, the second in command, a sullen and ferocious character, but desperately brave ; and both were revelling in the pride of success and the wantonness of rude luxury. "A health," shouted Adolfo, "to the brain that devised, and the hand that wrought, the boldest emprise that ever crowned an outlaw !—a health to the eagle who holds in his talons a prey that makes him indeed the king of birds ! Now pledge me deeply, Gerand ! I have a glorious vision of the huge coffers of the Lord of

Courtenaye yawning like opening graves, and yielding up to a joyful resurrection some thousands of bezants and golden crowns that have slumbered there for centuries."

"Thy rashness had well nigh lost us the sight of that beatific vision," muttered Gerand. "What a plague hadst thou to do to thrust thyself amid the Crusaders and the heretics, like some fantastic knight of adventure in a troubadour's song, and set lance in rest when thou shouldst have laid spur to flank. An' thy foolish humour of valour were not near marring the game and missing the prize, I would I might never rob pilgrim again!"

"By St. Dennis of France!" answered the outlaw, "I went with purpose to have secured the lady first;—but when I heard the war-cry shouted and the bugles wound, and saw the banners stream and the knights charge, I could not choose but share the feast to which I had such noble invitation; and hadst thou tasted of it, thou wouldst

have marvelled how one in harness could quit it so soon."

"This valour of thine at times leaves thee no better than a common man," said Gerand sullenly. "When the lady and train were borne hither, thou stoodest before them abased and mute, like one who knew not whether thou wast their prisoner, or they thy thrall, as I am a true man!"

"Say rather, as thou art a false knave!"

"All's one for that. I was about to ask thee whether we were not best to convey them to their castle back again."

"By the mass! and if thou hadst, at that moment I would have said, 'Marry, with all my heart!' I am not one to blench for the threats of man or the tears of woman;—but when I saw that noble lady, standing so beautiful and pale and helpless, amid a band of rude, lawless knaves like thee, I stood before her like a chidden urchin, and felt *that* tug at my heart-string which I am a fool to tell thee of, who couldst as soon con thy breviary as give utterance to one gentle thought."

“ Here be fit time and place for gentle thoughts !” said Gerand, as the blast of the horn made both spring to their feet and grasp their daggers instinctively, and the robber who had just left Marguerite, rushed into the hall.

“ How now !—thy tidings, knave ?”

“ A band of pilgrims, wealthily laden as I guess—for they travel slowly, and have armed men in their company—are about to cross the morass,” said the robber.

“ We will take order that the weight of their baggage do not sink them. Now, honour to the Saints ! they bring us ever our best visitors. A pestilence on those peevish Albigeois ! Did their cursed heresy prevail, there would not be a pilgrimage in the land to pay toll to the warders of our lonely tower. Fie on them ! I say. Where be our masks and mantles ? Summon our men ! These pilgrims have full wine-bags to be pressed, and boxes of costly reliques, and, perchance, purses of bezants. Foul shame it were if the holy men laboured under their

weight long, while quick hands were near to lighten them. St. Dennis so speed me in this essay, as I will dedicate on his altar four wax-candles, each of bigness enough to be the pillar of a church ! Ever most generous Saint ! send me a company of jolly pilgrims, and it shall go hard if thy altars be not the brightest in every church in France. And for the rest, so help me Heaven ! I will clear off all next Easter with the Abbot of Normoutier."

"These be thy gentle thoughts," said Gerand with a sullen sneer. The outlaw laughed: "I warred with knights yesterday: do thou engage with pilgrims to-day:—each to his destiny."—"But not to his choice," said Gerand gloomily, as he masked himself.

The outlaw was following, when the messenger grasped his arm. "The prisoner within," said he, "hath become outrageous. She says, she will be wedded to-night."—"Then wed her thyself!" said Adolfo, flinging him off, "and rid me of her and thee."—"Wed her!" quoth the robber; "I would

sooner hang her, withered succuba !”—“ Then hang her, an’ thou wilt, so thou molest me not.”—“ Marry and will ; from the highest pinnacle of thy tower thou shalt see her like a kite nailed to a peasant’s barn, and her kirtle floating like a banner, on thy return.”—“ Hark thee, knave,” said the outlaw, flinging back his houpland, and fixing the full force of his commanding eye on the speaker, “ I will have no cruelty. She is a fool, and treacherous ; but though thou mayest mock, thou shalt not abuse her ;—she is a worthless fringe on the garment which I kiss with my heart’s lips. I yield her to thy sport, but not thy barbarity ; and for the rest, on thy life meddle not with the female prisoners.”—“ Ay,” said the robber, when he was out of hearing, “ by his own good-will he would never have any one meddle with the female prisoners but himself.”

The lady Isabelle, from her casement, saw the brigands depart, and clasped her hands in a short moment of ecstasy ; and she even augured well from the frequent demands for

aid from the tower. Troop after troop poured out ; while the tower rang, from base to summit, with the hasty step of those who rushed to seize their arms, and made the port and drawbridge ring with their steel-shod steps. The conflict seemed a dangerous one ; and it was late in the twilight of that evening that the horn was blown, and faintly answered by the wearied party who wound their way up the rock. The iron voice of the outlaw was heard through the eight stories of the tower by ears quickened by terror. “ Fling the pilgrims into the dungeon ; let them see if their beads will ransom them ! Bear the wounded knight to safe tendance : give me a draught of wine : an’ he were not a Crusader, I would fling him from the summit of this rock, wounded as he is. We will hold him to ransom, and he shall pay in gold for every drop of blood he hath cost us to-day : but for his mad aid, we had won that band of pilgrims for saying ‘ Stand ! ’ A cup of wine, knaves ! and stick a torch in yon niche of the hall, that I may do myself right

when I am pledged to myself alone, and ye are howling over your paltry hurts, like maimed curs in a peasant's cottage. But look to the wounded knight, I charge ye. He bore him bravely. I would not see him suffer wrong for twice the value of this day's booty."

The wounded knight (who was no other than Paladour) was borne insensible in the arms of two of the robbers, who, still smarting under the wounds he had dealt with no sparing hand, were not in the mood to treat their charge too gently.

"Where have ye left the prisoner?" said Gerand, who saw them descending the stair by the light of a torch Bertran (one of them) carried. "Where best beseems his valour to be," said Bertran. "He fought to-day like a devil, and we have bestowed him where he will have devils enough to fight with,—in that dark chamber where the fiend is heard to yell so fearfully at night. Being a Crusader, he is doubtless armed with a spell or relique, or such godly gear as will

prevent the fiend, and save us from being tormented before our time.”—“Tarry, and lend me thine arm, knave,” said Gerand : “my wounds begin to ache, and I am not in the mood for the fierce revel that Adolfo is to win courage to accost the lady with. He hath sworn he will treat with her for her ransom to-night.”—“Hasten back,” said Bertran to his comrade, “and I will treat thee with a scene of mirth worth all the feats of a jongleur, or the moralities played by the priests at Easter.” His companion soon joined him, and they proceeded together to dame Marguerite’s cell, who saw with delight the gleam as it appeared through the many crevices of her door. “Noble lady,—for so we must call you now,” said Bertran, with a low obeisance,—“we come to conduct you to the presence of your noble and enamoured knight.”—“In good time,” said the dame ; “for here have I sat all day, like an owl in the hole of a ruined wall, with no companion save the wind whistling through the loop-hole—no couch save this seat, that would mortify the

limbs of a hermit—no food but a sorry loaf and a pitcher of sour wine,—with sundry other lacks that a gentlewoman cannot signify. Truly this knight of thine had needs be valiant and loving, to make amends for all I have borne for his sake.”—“Thou wilt find him all that troubadours sing and maidens dream of, and, moreover, impatient to clasp thee to his bosom.”—“Nay, I will not be so fiercely handled,” said the dame.—“I doubt thou wilt,” said the other outlaw.—“He is, perchance, very young, then,” said Marguerite, simpering.—“Thou wouldst not credit me if I said how young,” said Bertran.—“He was but three when he was caught,” quoth the other.—“Caught!” echoed Marguerite.—“Alas! noble lady,” said Bertran, winking at his comrade, “he is, like thyself, a captive: two years hath he been the thrall of Adolfo, who now repents him that he hath held him so long prisoner, and will shortly set him free ransomless.”—“Nay, for that matter,” said the dame, “an imprisoned knight hath a rich charm for the fancy of a

maiden like me, who always loved a romaunt better than her breviary; and, as long as he is a thrall, there is less fear of his escaping from me. But, faithful squire, you have never painted to me the goodly favour of your knight.”—“Marry, for his looks,” said Bertran, stroking his chin, “there be those who like them not; but, nevertheless, he hath somewhat, methinks—I know not how, as it were, to phrase it—somewhat that strangely resembles thine own favour, noble lady.”—“Then he is not altogether uncomely,” said the dame, spreading her hand before her face.—“Every whit as comely as thou art,” answered the other.—“And he is of an ancient noble stock, thou tellest me?” said the dame.—“Nay, of the most ancient family in France:—men say his ancestors were lords of mountain and plain ere the forefathers of King Philip were known; and that all our nobility were the sons of yesterday, compared to his high and unknown descent.”—“Young, noble, and enamoured—and a prisoner!—lead me to him,

and I will yield what solace an afflicted maiden can give," said Marguerite.—“ Yet how shall I present myself to him, my tunic rent, my coif disarranged, my hair disordered, my—” “ Trust me, noble lady,” said Bertran, “ he would better like thee all disarrayed.”—“ You make me blush,” murmured Marguerite.—“ That would be a task to defy the devil,” said the comrade.—“ How meanest thou ?” said the dame.—“ He means,” quoth Bertran, winking again at his comrade, “ that the devil himself could not raise a blush on a cheek like thine, unconscious of aught but the glow of maiden pudency.”—So saying, Bertran supported one arm, while his comrade lighting a splinter of pine at the torch, caught the other, and led the dame, nothing loth, through a paved passage, near the centre of which was a circular aperture covered by a stone, about the size of that through which the Cardinal de Guise was thrust into a dungeon, and afterwards murdered, and which a modern traveller declares to be no larger than that of a hole in the

pathways of London for admitting coals. The party, as they approached the brink of this precipice, might have presented a group for a Gothic Hogarth. The fierce light that gleamed from the splintered pine, fell on the figures of the robbers, who were half-armed, their steel-caps and breast-plates clasped, but in coats of buff leather; and between them minced the dainty form of dame Marguerite, her head-gear aside; the ringlets, that should have shaded her forehead, streaming on her shoulder, and her whole costume *tout-a-tort*.

“ Here rest we,” said Bertran, stopping at the circular stone. “ Here waits thy bridegroom.”—“ Where?” exclaimed Marguerite.—“ Even where I stand,” said the robber; “ and here thou must descend to meet his embraces.”—“ How, in the name of all the devils, am I to descend,” quoth the irritated gouvernante, “ through a hole that would not admit a weasel?”—“ Noble lady, thou dost cruel wrong to thy slight form in saying so,” said Bertran; “ divest thee of thy superfluous trappings, and thou mayest defy a score

of weasels.”—“ Spare my veil,” cried Marguerite.—“ It might be rent by the craggy stones of the vault,” said Bertran.—“ But my kirtle and tunic—nay, this is going too far.”—“ Thy knight will love thee best so disarrayed.”—“ But my skirt?”—“ And how couldst thou with that monstrous skirt, hung round with pouncet-box, fan, and God knows what fooleries, make thy way to thy enamoured knight down such a narrow passage?—doff them altogether.”—“ Nay, ye have doffed me of them already, but wherefore those ropes? I will not be bound.”—“ Ay, bound for ever to thy knight by these ropes, which thou shalt henceforth call silken cords, that form the steps of thy ladder of ambition and desire:—how should else thy taper waist and slender limbs be visible to thy knight, who howls and maddens in his apartment below to grasp thee?”—“ Bind me, then, if it must be,” said Marguerite, as, winding the rope round her waist, they lowered her through the aperture, and then heaving up the flags on both sides of the hole, held the pine-torch far

downwards to watch her reception from her noble lover.

The unfortunate Marguerite found herself in a vault of narrow dimensions, of which the faint gleam of light from above enabled her only to descry a portion ; judging, however, that a noble and enamoured knight lay captive in the dungeon, she prepared to address him :—

“ The light of beauty, it is said, can irradiate the darkest prison, and I have heard troubadours sing that the gleam of their lady’s eyes could pierce even the dungeon’s darkness, in which knights were held captive by cruel Saracens ; how much more then, noble though enthralled knight”—a hideous howl, or rather yell, here burst on her ears.—

“ Take not thy captivity so to heart, noble prisoner ; here is one who will turn thy thrall to pleasure—thy chains to—Oh, God ! how his eyes glare—this is no knight—how his yell appals me—it is—it is a demon”—as a wolf that was kept in the dungeon for the purpose of terrifying the prisoners, or perhaps

for a more horrible one, sprang at her as far as his chain allowed him. The shrieks of Marguerite actually drowned the yell of the savage. "Take me up! take me up!" she screamed, "or ye shall be hung from the highest battlement of your tower."—"Nay, is it thus thou flyest from thy bridegroom?" cried the banditti, laughing at her terrors; and they continued to repeat in succession,— "Consider his ancient descent—his youth—his resemblance to thyself—his wish to clasp thee to his bosom—his captivity," till Marguerite, mad with terror, made a desperate spring to catch at the hole of the vault, and, on their raising her from it, darted instinctively towards the staircase; and half-dressed as she was, lost not a step, or suffered one scream to overtake another, till she had reached the door of the lady Isabelle's apartment.

CHAPTER XIII.

He threw her on a milk-white steed,
An' himsel' lap up behind her;
An' they are awa' to th' Highland hills,
An' her friends they canna' find her.

Old Ballad.

THOSE screams, which might have awakened the dead, broke the deep trance of one who was almost so. Paladour had been savagely flung on the stone-floor of one of the chambers of the tower by the bandits. The wound he had received in his encounter with the robbers had stunned him; it was dextrously directed at the fracture in his helmet, which the clubs of the Albigeois had left the preceding day. Our knight was no hero of the troubadour's songs, who could fight three days and nights in his stirrups, sans intermission, and undergo wounds without pain in suffering, or difficulty in healing—he was mortal both in frame and feeling.

He had toiled among the Crusaders in sweat and blood, during the day of which the Albigeois had reaped the bloody harvest—his night had been one of travel, terror, and weariness. He had joined at dawn the pilgrims who were assailed by the band of Adolfo, against whom his lance had been driven with resistless force, till, yielding to lassitude, his arm began to droop, and, his armour pointing him out as a prey to the robbers, he was borne to l'Aigle sur la Roche, and, in a state between swoon and sleep, lay apparently senseless till awakened by the shrieks of dame Marguerite. Then a dim vision rolled over his clouded senses—he thought himself among the Crusaders, and struggled to shout his war-cry, “*La Croix sanglante !*” Then came on that horrid feeling of obtuse pain that men experience between sleeping and waking, when they begin to know that they are to awake in pain, to the recollection of suffering that has been endured, or the anticipation of suffering that is to commence.—Then

the distinct recollection of his having been engaged in a wild adventure for a party of pilgrims—of his being struck down—he knew not by whom, and borne he knew not where.—Last, as if to soothe him into the belief that all had been a dream, came the bright image of the lady Isabelle, “smoothing the darkness of his vision till it smiled;” when the wild screams of dame Marguerite burst on his ears. He started up; then believing it one of those sounds which might be heard by night and day with little notice in an outlaw’s hold, he tried with the tossing agony of one in pain to turn to rest.

Another cry reached his ears. The sound last heard was, apparently, one that never issued from human lungs; it was the howl of a wild animal. The chamber in which Paladour lay, was one which seemed, like the rest, to occupy the square of the tower; but beside the stair which communicated with all the apartments, there were others hollowed in the depth of the wall,

which, in many similar towers, bear testimony not only to the masonic skill with which they must have been constructed in so rude an age, but to the patience with which the gigantic race of former days must have submitted to modes of entering doors, and threading stairs, that would have puzzled modern dwarfs.

The howl—it was no human sound—was repeated. Paladour started up, and gazed round his chamber. The walls were of unhewn stone, the floor was broken, the ceiling rudely vaulted; one door visible to his bewildered eye straightly closed on the outside, no means appearing of opening it to the possessor of the apartment; but the moonlight gleaming brightly through a stone aperture barred with iron, fell on a niche, in which there appeared a pointed arch formed in the wall, and originally intended for the construction of another door, where none, however, was inserted, and in whose shadow stood a shapeless form, that grinned

and nodded at the knight some time before his weakened sight could descry it.

“Art thou man, or fiend?” said Paladour at last. “I have, methinks, dealt with both; but thy shape, and the sound thou utterest, defeat conjecture.”—“I am neither,” said the figure, “though oft I deem I am the latter. Tell me now the deeds and motions of your fiend, what be his appetites, the food he loves, the foul thoughts he dwells on, the hours at which his howl is heard piercing human ears and thrilling human hearts.”—“I know not how to answer such fearful questioning,” said the knight. “Then I will answer it for thee,” said the figure. “My loved hour is night, my food is torn from the grave;” and he held in his hand what seemed horrible confirmation of what he uttered; “and my voice thou hast heard before,—it hath made the boldest hearts in this tower of guilt quake to their core, and the murderer grasp at his unsheathed weapon in his dream—wouldst thou hear it again?”

And by a strong exertion of his chest and dilation of his mouth, he seemed prepared to utter another of those fierce howls which Paladour had heard before. "Thou'lt drive me mad," said the knight, stopping his ears; "in the name of all the devils, what art thou?"—"Mad," repeated the figure eagerly, as if grasping at the interpreting sound; "Mad, ay! that is it: I am a mad wolf;" and with hideous grimaces and wild leaps he bounded towards Paladour. The wounded knight had no defence to make; yet he half rose from his couch of stone as if to grapple with the fearful being who approached him, when the latter suddenly stopped and exclaimed, "Do you not see I am a wolf?—look, examine me." A strong gleam of moonlight darting through the aperture, disclosed the form of the horrible querist. It was that of a human being, low and coarsely formed; his beard and hair almost concealed his countenance; something like a wolf's skin was wrapt about him, and his

hand held too evidently the 'proof of his demoniac appetite.

The knight sunk shuddering back on his couch. It was evidently a man in the most horrid paroxysm of lycanthropy, a distemper now unknown, but well authenticated to have existed at a far later period than that of our tale.

"Examine me," said the unhappy wretch ;
"I tell thee I am a wolf. Trust not my human skin—the *hairs grow inward**, and I am a wolf within—a man outward only. Slay me, and thou wilt be satisfied of the truth. The hairs grow inward—the wolfish coat is within—the wolfish heart is within—the wolfish fangs are within;—yet, still, here is the food, and I cannot gnaw it as a wolf should :"—and he made the execrable morsel again visible.

"Sir wolf," said Paladour, gathering strength and courage for this fearful encoun-

* This declaration was actually made by an unhappy wretch in the most rabid, but still conscious stage of the disease.

ter, and suddenly conceiving a hope that inspired and augmented both, "dare you shew me your den?"—"That will I, gladly," said the lunatic; "there be choice morsels there on which thou mayest feed, and howl between at the moon, that throws her greedy beams through the iron grate."

Paladour, shuddering, attempted to rise from his couch and follow his fearful guide, as the latter hobbled and capered before him with hideous imitation of the paces of a wolf. On a sudden he placed his back to the wall, and uttered a howl that made the hair of the knight stand on end. "And wherefore is that horrid cry?" he exclaimed, stopping his ears.—"It is to scare other wolves from my den," said his companion; "for, wot ye, there be many in the cliffs of this steepy rock:"—and he pointed to the various stories of the tower (for they were now on the stair) with a distinctness that shewed, though his intellect was destroyed, his observation and memory were unimpaired.

Paladour, though unacquainted with the

horrors of the haunted chamber, into which he had been purposely flung by the bandits, began to conceive that the dreadful secret of this wretch's lycanthropy was closely kept and employed as an engine of terror by the chief; he also conceived that this unhappy being was probably conversant with all the secret passages of the tower; and from these circumstances he derived new hope and heart, having such a fearless spirit that he would have followed the fiend himself to the rescue of the lady Isabelle. Weak and wounded as he was, he leaned against the wall, and, summoning a quick apprehension and invincible spirit to his aid, he demanded, in terms suited to the perverted capacity of his miserable companion, whether these wolves did not sometimes prey on lambs, and whether there were not some prisoners of that harmless breed immured in the tower?

"Thou wottest well of the wolves that tenant here," said the wretched being. "I heard lambs bleat far—far above me this night;"—and he pointed with strong gesture

to the upper story, thus designating the prison of the lady Isabelle. "But what of them? there be morsels below to feast the palate of a prince. Come with me and feed!"

"So will I," said the knight, "an' thou first show me the lambs that were seized to-day, and are held in this fastness."

A wild laugh burst from the maniac as he pointed, with frantic gestures, upward and downward the stair. "There," he howled, "is food for thee and me. Wilt thou come and feast? Above and yonder is another feast prepared. Wot ye, here we are all wolves; and some feast on the dead, and some on the living. Which will ye feed on?—choose ye."

Paladour saw the necessity of humouring the wretched being, and, though he recoiled at the effort, replied—"Sir wolf, thou hast doubtless a grudging towards the choice morsels in thy den. I will not contend with thee for them: thy fangs and claws might soon make me repent my daring." Here the wretch shivered and moved

with horrid delight. "Now, sir wolf, show me but where the prey lies which hath fallen into other clutches, and I will not disturb thy repast."

The cunning, rabid appetite, and eager malignity of intelligence displayed in the features of the lycanthrope at this moment defy all power of description. He was evidently proud of his secret, anxious to betray it, fearful of being imposed on, and longing to partake of his own fearful food undisturbed. After a short pause, obeying the most powerful of these impulses, and glancing a downward look on his *den*, he motioned to the knight to follow him, and trotted with his horrid ambiguity of motion up the dark and narrow stair. The knight followed. His fearful guide paused suddenly, and made a motion to Paladour to follow his example, while he thrust his face through a crevice between the stones of the wall, and withdrew it in a moment. Paladour applied himself to the crevice, and saw an object which made him gaze with soul and eye; nor could

he withdraw what might be called the *grasp of sight*, till the wretched being muttered to him, "Thou hast thy prey!—may I feed on mine undisturbed?"

"Accursed brute!" said the knight, "feed on what thou wilt; howl where thou mayest;—but begone!"

With a faint howl the lycanthrope disappeared down the stair. The knight remained rivetted to the spot. The crevice between the stones of the wall, in a place where they were unshrouded by tapestry, gave him a full view of the interior of the apartment: it was that to which the lady Isabelle had been conducted, and which we have described as furnished with all the rude magnificence that a robber's hold could afford. The group within might have indeed fixed a less anxious gaze than that of Paladour.

The lady Isabelle sat on a low seat covered with tapestry; her splendid habit was deranged, and her fine hair floated on her shoulders, and, descending far lower, seemed to supply the place of her silver-tissued veil

that lay in a heap beside her. Pride and terror, anger and supplication, passed across her beautiful features, like storm and sunshine over a landscape in autumn ; but pride predominated still : there was a trembling dignity about her, that seemed intended rather to impress the idea of power than to be conscious of it herself ; her cheek was as pale as that of the dead, but her eyes were burning with a light, that even fearfully contrasted that paleness.

A little behind her stood her damsels, trembling as much at their lady's emotion as at the cause of it, towards which their eyes, like hers, were directed, and grasping the folds of her mantle, with an attitude that seemed as if they sought at once to give and receive protection. In a corner of the apartment stood the figure of the outlaw, in an attitude between defiance and alarm, his features inflamed with intoxication and fierce passions, yet awed by the sight of beauty in despair, and struggling to hide from himself and her that he trembled

before his own victim, and that victim in his power. It seemed that the lady, by her broken respiration, had but just ceased speaking, but had been unheard amid the screams of Marguerite; louder than those rose the voice of the incensed outlaw.—“Haughty lady,” he cried, “remember thou art in the talons of the eagle, who never pounced on prey that he resigned.”—“Slave and villain,” said the incensed beauty, trembling with passion and terror; “such another word, and these walls that enclose me shall prove my grave. Thank Heaven they are hard enough to dash this slight frame into atoms before thy very sight!”

A laugh of rude derision burst from the outlaw; but his inflamed eyes menaced more than scorn, and he seemed advancing to fulfil their threat. The damsels shrieked. At this moment, a slight but determined movement of the lady Isabelle (who half-started from her seat), her compressed lips, and the fixed and fearful bending of her eye on the walls of her prison, made the bold outlaw shrink

before her. At the same moment, a sound was heard that seemed like a groan heaved from the bosom of a giant ; it was followed by a shock that made the strong walls ring. It proceeded from Paladour, who, maddened by the sight of danger he could not avert, and of indignity he could not avenge, uttered a groan of agony, and fell in the full weight of his heavy armour on the spot where he stood.

CHAPTER XIV.

Marry, Sir, sometimes he is a kind of puritan.
Oh! if I thought that, I'd beat him like a dog.

SHAKESPEARE'S *Twelfth Night*.

OUR wandering tale now returns to the Deacon Mephibosheth, who had set out in pursuit of the dainties promised by De Verac, which were as apocryphal as Sancho Panza's islands and earldoms. For a weary day did the deacon pursue this scentless track, leaving literally no stone unturned to find the partridge, pasty, and marchpane, promised him in those deceitful visions. Often and high did he rear his nostril, expecting ever and anon to be treated with that delicious flavour which was to exhale from the viands to which his imagination attached such luxury of enjoyment. "Jour-

neying with this intent," the deacon was alike surprised and disappointed, when, at the close of evening, he found himself bewildered amid a labyrinth of rocky hills and glens, which drove him from the thoughts of his expected repast, to the more immediate consideration of how he might effect his return to his party.

At this moment, which, considering the state of the country, might have proved a trying one to a man of more metal than the deacon Mephibosheth, his ears were greeted by the sound of the feet of mules or horses, and that of human voices, and still more by the conviction that, from the slowness of their pace, and the tranquillity of their tones, the travellers were men of peace. A few moments after, emerging from behind a hill, rode forth two men on mules and one on horseback, who seemed debating of their way, and who agreed finally to refer it to the first traveller they might meet. The deacon caught the names of the places as they spoke, and along with them a knowledge both of where he himself was, and of

his capacity of being their guide.—“ *Quem quæritis, adsum,*” said he, suddenly appearing : “ I know the place you wot of, and will guide you thither, on well assurance of my safe conduct, it being parcel mine own way.” —“ This guide must be trustworthy, forasmuch as he greeteth us in Latin,” said one of them.—“ Do as thou hast said, brother, with speed, for the night is closing in.” —“ Nay, take me with you,” quoth the deacon, “ the labourer is worthy of his hire. I have fasted all day in this desert, and lack refreshment, such as, doubtless, those ample bags are stored with ;”—for this part of their equipment had not escaped his observation.—“ Marry, thou hast guessed right, nor shalt thou lack other guerdon so thou keep touch with us,” said the foremost rider.—“ Touch not, taste not, handle not,” said the deacon ; then suddenly checking himself, he assisted the speaker to empty the contents of a bag or wallet that lay on the shoulders of his mule, on which he fastened with infinite eagerness, the riders halting the while, and the conversation being

strangely divided between their enquiries and the deacon's late reminiscences and present occupation. "And how far, sayest thou, must we fare, ere we reach ——?" "A red-legged partridge," muttered the deacon, discussing a capon, which his imagination was comparing with the delicious viands promised by Verac.

"He hears me not," said the horseman; then raising his voice, "Many mountain streams cross us in our way?"—"A tan of Malvoisie," said the deacon, devoutly applying himself to a leathern bottle, but still dreaming of Verac's golden promises.—"And who the devil is to guide us across them?" said the querist:—"A conger-eel," quoth the deacon.—"He is stark wode," said another rider.—"He swam up the Seine to Paris on the back of the king's fishmonger, or how was it?" said the deacon. "Ah, I remember me now, it was all a device of Satan's to lure me into the snares of the enemy, but I have defied him and prevailed; and lo, here is spread for me a table in the wilderness."

So saying, he dispatched the capon, a huge cheese, and the contents of the leathern bottle, and then rising with all the speed his lameness permitted, demanded the bones of the former, and the skin of the latter.

“Even wear them thyself as trophies of thy victory,” said one of the riders, “for never did knight on foughten field earn them more hardly, or merit them more.”—“Sayest thou me so?” said the deacon, disposing them in different parts of his garb, “then shall not they or thy counsel be cast away. And now, sir traveller, I am for you, over heath or holm, glen or rock; through mountain mist, or fog of the valley.”—“We have a mad guide towards,” said the traveller, drawing up his rein; “but how wilt thou, being on foot, keep pace with our mules, slow-paced as they be?”—“All’s one for that,” said the deacon, “the path to home lacks half its length to the foot that treads it, and I shall, perchance, quit you on the way with some spiritual dainties for your temporal refection.”—“He

is a pardoner," whispered one of the party.— "Rather a pilgrim, who hath been foundered, wandering from shrine to shrine," replied his companion. — "Whoever he be," said the third, "he hath promised us safe guidance, and it is time we put him to the proof—the sun is far behind the hills, and the way uncertain, if not perilous."

The deacon, as he halted beside his new associates, had full leisure to note their appearance, for the inequalities and deviations of the track made him, spite of his infirmity, a match in speed with the best mounted of the party. The two who rode on mules were wrapped in houplands, which hung on the flanks of their beasts, but under their hoods might be seen the folds of a monk's cowl: the third, who was a horseman, seemed to have nothing ecclesiastical about him, save in the peaceableness of his demeanour. He wore a dark cassock, and a short cloak, with a cap of cloth on his head, but he managed his horse with the air and spirit of one used to long journeys and rough encounters with wild roads, and

the animal that bore him over them:—this was no other than the celebrated Guillaume de Rubriques, whose travels into Tartary were then the theme of all tongues*, and whose adventures prove that there are no æras in savage life, as at the distance of centuries it presents just the same picture of the caprice, insolence, cowardice, and vacillation that may be found in Lord Macartney's and Lord Amherst's recent embassies to China, or Cox's residentship in the Burmhan empire. With these companions did the deacon set on, though we will do him the justice to say that he abhorred the monk's cowl as he would the devil's hoof, and therefore by no means suspected of what company he was the associate:—"And now I pray you, sir stranger," said one of them, "resume your tale of foreign lands; methinks, while I hear you, I am presently there myself, which, in faith, I had rather be by proxy than presence,

* Monstrous anachronism! Rubriques lived, I believe, 150 years later.

lacking the courage to travel, and the skill to read. The passages which befell me," said Rusbriquis, "at the court of the Tartar king, I have already told."—"What king saidst thou?" interrupted the deacon.—"I said the king of Tartary."—"Out on thee for an impostor!" cried Mephibosheth, "thinkest thou to put the change upon us with tales and tricks of Ind and the Antipodes? We have heard of a king of England, a king of Aragon, nay of kings of Northern countries, whose names our language knows not; but who hath ever heard of that outlandish king thou namest?"—"Peace, and let him proceed, thou bold fellow," said the monk; "I uphold that there is a king of Tartary."—"It is a figment," said the deacon, "shew me such a place as Tartary in the Scriptures."—"On leaving* the king," said the traveller, "I was had into the chief temple, where the priests were doing service to their idols: these were small figures of men and women sorely smutched by reason of the

* Vide Rusbriquis for this curious passage.

lamps that burn there continually; before them hung pieces of scarlet cloth, to which were fastened waxen effigies of various parts of the body, offered by those whom the idols were said to have healed, being evil-disposed in their limbs. Some of these poor heathens were bowing themselves before the figures of the idols to the ground, while the priests went on chanting, or rather moaning, in slow cadence, their idolatrous liturgy; but what they said I know not, nor, perchance, would it have well liked Christian ears to hear them. Some also were making vows for the recovery of those who were sick, or the return of the absent, offering money, flowers, or gums to the idols; the priests instructing them how to make these offerings, keeping the money themselves, and carefully presenting the smoke to the idols, the silly laics counting them benefactors for the same, and much extolling the goodness of these priests."

The monks crossed themselves at this account, which had a very different effect on

the deacon.—“ Now loud thou liest, sir traveller,” said he, “ loud thou liest, as I told thee at first ; thou dost bear us in hand with tales of Tartarus or Tartary ; and lo ! thou tellest of what may be seen in every idolatrous steeple-house in France at this day.” “ How ! what meanest thou ?—what sayest thou ?” said the three eager voices of the travellers, in a kind of unison trio.—“ I say that I will testify against your abominations,” quoth Mephibosheth : “ need we go to Tartary, or how callest thou it, to witness what thou tellest us of ? have ye not in your churches muttering priests, a chanted mass, rags and reliques, vows, pilgrims, penances, and processions ; censers with incense, and vessels of flowers, and offerings of silver, and offerings of gold, which ye keep for yourselves, giving the smoke of your tapers and the smell of incense to your idols on the high places ?—And is *this* idolatry among the paynim folk, and *latritia* and *dulia* when practised by monks and friars ?”—“ In the name of all the devils,”

cried the monks, "whom have we got for a guide?"—"A guide in truth," said Mephibosheth, "not a guide over mountain and moor, but a guide that will make the crooked straight, and cause that your feet stumble not on the dark mountains:—I am one that am raised up to testify against an idolatrous generation; I am as one appointed to remove the high places, and to cut down the groves, and to break in pieces the brazen serpent, and call it Nehushtan. At the voice of my crying, Bel shall bow down, Nebo shall stoop, and men shall cast the idols of silver and the idols of gold, which they made to worship, to the moles and to the bats."

Here the monks crossed themselves in horror, and Mephibosheth, who had an excellent memory, took advantage of their silence to repeat the forty-fourth chapter of Isaiah from beginning to end, without missing a word by the way. This gave them time to recover from their amazement, and the first use they made of their hands, after they had recovered

from their uplifted position, was to seize on the deacon, whom they held fast, without, however, being determined as to the mode in which they would express their gratitude for his exhortation. — “What means this, my masters?” cried Mephibosheth, vainly struggling with them; “why do ye lay hands on me; will ye rend my raiment? will ye slay me?” — “Thou hast, indeed, spoken matters that should be answered with thy life,” said one of the monks. “By the faith of my order!” said the other, “he is either an incarnate fiend, or an heretic, and in either case must be dealt with: if the one, by a cunning exorcist; if the other, by those means which the legate well handled in his *Sermo de hæreticis comburendis*.” — “And is this my guerdon for your safe guidance?” quoth the unfortunate deacon; “am I thus quitted for leading you by the right path where your footsteps slipt not?” — “Marry art thou,” said Rusbriquis, who was assisting to tie his hands, “and it is but doing reason and fair quittance withal.

Thou hast been their guide in carnal things, and they will be thy guides in things spiritual ; so follow, Sir Catechumen, with what stomach you may, for yonder are the towers of the abbey of Normoutier ;” and the travellers indeed drew near that stately pile of which the monks were inmates.—“ Stomach !” murmured the deacon internally, “ alas ! I have followed my stomach but too far !—Ah, Mephibosheth, Mephibosheth, thy god hath been thy belly, and a devil of a god he is likely to prove ; better hadst thou fared gnawing a fragment of goat’s-milk cheese, though it were hard enough to split thy teeth in splinters, and quaffing whey, though sourer than all vinegar, than to have gone after their feast of fat things, and desired their dainty meats. Oh ! for a mess of pottage and a draught of water as it were in safety, or perchance a savoury quarter of a kid of the goats, or peradventure, portion of a stalled ox, or store of feathered fowls ! The Lord rebuke that prating, vapouring gallant, with his apo-

cryphal conger and legendary venison, thus to send me a whoring after the flesh-pots of Egypt, when I might have fed on manna in the wilderness!—Behold now I am brought into captivity, and led unto the death.”

They were now at the gate, on which they smote with their riding rods, and, to the enquiry of the porter, “Who knocked so late?” replied, “Open quickly, for we are brothers Austin and Hilary, with the traveller the famous Rusbriquis, and a prisoner, of whom we know not well whether he be heretic or only devil incarnate.”—“If he be heretic,” quoth the porter, whose voice announced him very drunk—“if he be heretic, I will not undraw a bolt for him—marry if he be devil, he is dearly welcome, for we have chosen an abbot of mis-rule, the revels are held in the chapter-room, and we lack a devil for the nonce.”—“Truce with thy foolery,” said the monk; “we bring thee wine from Beaucaire.” No talisman could sooner have opened the doors of an enchanted palace in romance, than these few

words did the gate of the abbey; and the monks, hurrying Rusbriquis and the deacon along with them through a cloister that ran round three sides of the outer court, flung open the doors of the spacious chapter-room, which the brotherhood, in that cold season, preferred as the scene of their revels to the vast refectory, where, erewhile, had feasted the band of the Crusaders. As the doors were flung open, a sight burst on the eyes of the astonished deacon that made him for a moment imagine himself a Daniel summoned to the idolatrous feast of Belshazzar.

In the absence of the Abbot of Normoutier the brotherhood had agreed to hold a species of revel, then not inadmissible within conventual walls, had elected their abbot of misrule, dispatched missives in search of lemans and costly wines; and the relaxed character of the abbot gave them little cause of fear that their frolic, however it might pass the bounds of decorum, would transgress the limits of his patience. The scene disclosed by the open-

ing doors surpasses all power of description. In this monastic masquerade some had assumed the habits of classical, others of scriptural personages, and all appeared preparing for a dance, however dissonant their characters or unassociating their costumes might be,

They were all arrayed in dresses which, whether appropriate or not, were wildly fantastical, and even exaggerated into a kind of frantic extravagance, and the faces of most of these revellers were covered with gilt vizors, which, concealing all resemblance to the human countenance, diffused a strange and horrid glitter over their featureless faces; their language, too, was a squeak or gibber, and their dialogue, carried on rather by gestures than by words, seemed a kind of diabolical short-hand. Torches, held by the lay-brothers, who laughed, however, too heartily at this metamorphosis to hold them quite straight, shed a red and smoky light on the wild group of these clerical masqueraders; and in a corner others were holding back the

dogs belonging to the abbey, who, terrified at the strange appearances around them, would have flown at them unless withheld, and whose ceaseless barking made a kind of concert with the general uproar of this monastical festival—their eager eyes, pointed heads, and the stretched arms, and the encouraging voices of their young excitors, making no bad background to the painting. “Now Heaven protect me!” said the unfortunate deacon, “that these fiends tear me not in pieces!—alas! I am finely holpen.” The abbot of misrule, who was distinguished by his tinsel mitre, crosier, and ring, and a superior portion of extravagance and absurdity in his vestments and gestures, demanded of the travellers who they were that sought admittance to the solemn rites he was about to celebrate. “Two poor monks of the order of St. Benedict,” answered the ecclesiastics, “who return from pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Bacchus of Beaucaire;” and they produced the well-filled skins that testified the success of their mission.—“Relics of value in truth,” said the

abbot, "and that shall be meetly enshrined ere long," as he stroked his ample paunch at sight of the wine; "and whom bring you to this our cloister of misrule?" "I am Guillaume de Rusbriquis, the famed traveller," said Rusbriquis, entering into the spirit of the revel; "I have journeyed from pole to pole—have helped the sun to go on horseback in the east, and held his stirrup when he alighted in the west—have been shipwrecked in the frozen ocean, and anchored on the back of a kraken, deeming it to be the main land. Marry, if ye doubt the truth I tell, here is my fellow-traveller," pointing to Mephibosheth, "who came by this halt in his gait from sojourning overlong in the land of Antipodes, and wholly forgetting to walk on his feet."—"He speaks brave matter," quoth the abbot, "and must needs be a traveller by his lying;—and thou who standest shivering and groaning there, art thou what he delivers thee?"—"I am one," said the deacon, "who am led captive into a strange land, and sit down to weep by the waters of Babylon."—"There

thou liest," said the abbot, "for there is not a drop of the waters of Babylon in the abbey or its neighbourhood: we know no such strange wines—take heed, fellow, for I do grievously suspect thee, from thy speech, to be as it were an Albigeois, in which case there were no more words but to hang thee; yet, that thou mayest perceive we are a merciful lord abbot, dance a-round with us, and it shall be thy purgation."—"Surely I will not dance," quoth the deacon, whose courage rose with opposition; "it is an abomination more befitting the daughter of the harlot Herodias than a deacon of the holy congregation. All dancing is evil, very evil, exceedingly evil, and not good—but to dance in the tents of Kedar and the tabernacles of the idolaters, to be set up on high among the ungodly, and dance in the high places, were an utter abomination:—wherefore I say, Down with the filthy squeaking of pipes, and the lewd jarring of crowds*, and—"—"So please

* Subaudi, *viva*.

you, my lord abbot," said one of the monks, "let us drown this peevish fellow's noise, and cause him to dance with us:—your true sour heretic (and your lordship perceives he is no better, though I shame to name such vermin before your lordship) needs no other martyrdom than the sight of free honest mirth."—"Thou sayest well," said the abbot; "he shall dance and die the death of the spleenful:—for the rest, let such of the nine worthies as be sober, lead forth Deborah, Judith, and Queen Dido—the three children in the furnace shall dance with Nebuchadnezzar to make up their old grudge—Susanna shall pace with one of the elders, and the Goddess of Chastity with the other—ourselves, the Abbot of Misrule, will lead the lady of loose-delight, with her paintings and her pouncings, her mincings and her mockings—and the heretic shall dance with the devil, and there is a company meetly sorted. Strike up, my masters."—Here the hapless Mèphibosheth was seized on by a hideous figure enveloped in a black garment, with cloven feet of flame colour, a tail that

swept the ground, a mask equipped with "eyes that glow and fangs that grin," and a huge pair of horns starting from the forehead. All his struggles availed nothing with his frightful partner : he was dragged into the circle, compelled to perform numerous pirouettes, which were more remarkable for velocity than grace, and if he relaxed for a moment in his exertions, a swinge of his partner's tail, a kick of his cloven foot, or a blow with his horns, set him prancing again with pain and terror till his strength was exhausted, and he fell to the ground. At this moment the cook was seen entering the hall, attended by the lay-brothers groaning under the heavy dishes they bore, and shouting in unison the monastic chorus—

Caput apri defero,
Reddens laudes Domino ;
Qui estis in convivio,
Plaudite cum cantico.

The revellers instantly surrounded the tables, covered with delicious fare, and flaggons of the choicest wines; and down sat pagan gods;

Christian martyrs, devils and angels, promiscuously. Susanna pledged the elders, while they could undergo her challenge—Queen Dido did reason to St. Dennis for France, in potations deeper than those Virgil describes her indulging in when she feasted Æneas—the three children in the furnace prayed to sit near Niobe—and Moses and Satan, observing they were the only persons of the drama who were accommodated with horns, agreed to sit together, and, to the vast amusement of the group, instead of carving, tore up a pasty that was before them with their horns.

“Fast and furious” waxed their mirth, till in a pause of laughter that had threatened to be inextinguishable, one of the party demanded whence that groan had issued? “It is a sigh breathed from a hole in a vessel of clay,” quoth the disconsolate deacon, who sat panting on the floor after his involuntary exercise, and wistfully gazing on the feasters.—“Yea, and a lame broken vessel,” said Rusbriquis—“And an empty vessel, I trow,” rejoined the abbot,—“how sayest thou, heretic?”—“It is

even so," said the deacon; "and I pray you, since I am become a by-word and mock, let me eat a morsel of savoury meat, and drink a cup of wine, lest I become like them that go down to the pit."—"By the mass, well prayed and in good season," said the mock abbot: "thou hast been as Daniel in the den of lions, but now thou shalt be as Daniel in the palace of the king of Babylon, and shalt think scorn of the water and pulse thou feddest on in thy peevish mood, and raw perverse nonage." The deacon hesitated not to accept the permission, and in a moment the humour of tormenting their prisoner was exchanged for one of feasting him: his trencher was filled with the choicest morsels, and his cup oft and mischievously replenished with wines, of whose power he was as ignorant as of their flavour.

The persecution thus disguised had its full effect; the good wine "did its good office soon," and the revellers with triumph perceived the increasing intoxication of the sullen heretic, who, preaching between every

mouthful, and hiccuping between every word, presented a spectacle of maudlin gravity, uncouth hilarity, zeal truly without knowledge, and eloquence without the power of speech.—

“Thou wilt chant a roundelay, or a hymn to the Lady Venus now?” asked Rusbriquis.—

“Yea, that I will, to be conformable,” quoth the deacon: “any thing in conformity, and to do reason.”—“And thou wilt dance a round with us, if need be?” asked the abbot.—

“Surely I will dance,” said Mephibosheth, “that is, in the way of comfort to the weak; I will dance, yea, dance very exceedingly—so that it shall be said hereafter, his dancing is as the dancing of Mephibosheth the deacon, for he danceth furiously;—but only in the way of comfort, mark ye me—otherwise not a grice, though fat bulls of Basan closed me in on every side.” “And thou wilt whisper a love-tale in a fair leman’s ear?” said another. “Why, there it is,” said the deacon, with an ineffable leer, “I yield it that thou hast me there; I was always the lovingest soul, and could skill of music in my youth; but away

with these vanities !—Hold, fellow ! I meant not the trencher and cupfull of new wine—Tell not me of fair women : if thou wilt pledge me in a cup of wine, so,—if not, would all the women in the land kept their own counsel and were sober—As for me, tears have been my meat day and night”—and he burst into a violent fit of drunken grief, which was drowned in the shouts of laughter that rose on every side. All gathered round him assailing him with invitations to eat, to drink, to dance, to sing, in the same moment, while others called as loudly on him to preach, that they might be converted by his doctrine : then their passions changing, they began to revile him ; curses and foul terms were heard on every side, and those who were distant began to throw fragments of the feast at him. This moment completed the distraction of the unfortunate deacon !—his senses reeled, his perceptions became confused, he saw false colours, and mistook one object for another—he answered the curses with a vacant laugh, and reviled those who still jested with him.

At length his habitual reminiscences, struggling with this temporary delirium, he snatched the huge knife from the hand of the sewer, and exclaiming, "I will break down the carved work thereof with axes and hammers," began to demolish the figures of the saints with which the abbot's chair of state was richly and beautifully wrought. In a twinkling, St. Lucia once more lost both her eyes, the head of St. Dennis dropped from under his arm, where he was carrying it; and the Abbot of Misrule himself narrowly escaped a blow that clove his mitre in twain—"Bel, bow down; Nebo, stoop, I say," shouted Mephibosheth, redoubling his blows, "for I am he who will bring the idols low, and will purge this house of Baal, and make it a draught-house unto this day;" and at the same moment, with unlucky dexterity, he flung two massive goblets at the painted windows, which missing not their mark, left the gorgeous and costly compartments in shivers.

The horror with which the monks beheld an act they deemed sacrilege, kept them at

first motionless ; but, recovering themselves, they rushed on the deacon, and holding him fast, looked round them in an impotence of rage, that knew not how to vent itself—"Accursed wretch !" said the abbot, who first found breath, "vile heretic, and worse than an infidel ! what have thine excommunicated hands done ?—but thou shalt die the death."

The deacon, but half recovered from his delirium, gazed with lightless eye and vacant face around him, "How will the abbot chafe when he sees the spoils of his goodly seat," cried he of Misrule, holding his cloven mitre with both hands,—“and the defeature of those glorious windows, the pride of the houses of God in all Languedoc,” rejoined the monks. “This it is,” said Rusbriquis, “to seek to tame a wolf, and have your fingers bitten off for your guerdon.”—“To death with him !” cried a hundred voices at once, amid which the abbot’s was heard loudest ; and the only question was now what punishment was adequate to his crime. The mode of dealing with heretics was summary as it was cruel

then : it was suggested to fling the wretched Mephibosheth into the enormous fire that burned on the hearth, and which might have consumed Goliath, while two or more held a huge bar of iron across the aperture, lowering or heightening it to prevent his escape, while his tortures admitted of the possibility of his making the attempt. This horrid proposal was negatived only by the abbot's remarking that the screams of the victim would disturb them at their revel.—“ Let his tongue be first plucked out,” said one of the monks.—“ And how shall we purify the chamber—this chamber royal in our palace of misrule, from the noisome smell of burning bones !” said the abbot—“ foh ! we do amerce thee in a cup of wine, for giving such unsavoury counsel to thy liege.” —“ Let him be flung from the highest tower of the abbey, and let the hogs feed on his carcase as it lies i' the court,” said another.—“ The night is over cold to stand shivering on the battlements of the abbey tower,” objected the abbot ; “ and he who rises betimes to see the hogs at breakfast,

breaks the first law of our realm of misrule, which sets forth that all its loyal subjects must be a-bed at noon, and a-foot at midnight; wherefore, my censure is, that we hang up the heretic *curia sedente*:—yon grimly-carved visage that frowns from the ribbed arch of the door shall serve for gallows; his partner in the dance shall howl him a black *santis* for shrift; and with so many knaves in the convent, it were hard if a rope were lacking for the nonce.”

This sentence was received with acclamation, probably because it promised the enjoyment of witnessing the prisoner's death without quitting their seats; and the rope was provided, flung over the giant-visage that projected with an ominous frown over the arch of the door, and held strongly on the other side by two brawny lay-brothers, before the hapless deacon understood for whom this fearful note of preparation was sounded.—“Wherefore am I led unto death?” he cried with a ghastly gaze; “look to it, and mark well what you do, for my blood will be re-

quired at your hand.”—“Is the rope well plaited?” said the abbot; “look that ye put forth all your strength, and wince not for his struggles.”—“Hold yet for a space,” said the deacon, “for a moment, hold!—ye have made me drunk with new wine; ye have caused me to speak unadvisedly with my lips—cut me not off in my transgression; grant me a space to cry for mercy; destroy not soul and body, spare me for a moment.” His lips grew horribly white, and he wrung his damp hands.—“The confessor we have appointed thee,” said the abbot, beckoning to the hideous figure that personated the devil, “will rightly handle the texts concerning thy departure, and expound to thee the promise of thy soon encounter with him. Wherefore delay ye to knit the rope?”—“It is knit and cast,” answered the hoarse but jocular voices of the executioners. The doomed wretch, flinging himself on his knees, and seeming to grow to the paved floor (for no force could rend him from it for a space), poured forth in his despair all the dreadful denunciations against

blood-shedding contained in the Jewish law, accompanied with strong additions of his own.—“Cursed be the men of blood!” he cried, “cursed be their wrath! for it is cruel—may the avenger of blood overtake them while his wrath is warm, and may the city of refuge be far from their path! Cursed be they with the primal curse, the curse of the first sinner out of Paradise, who was a murderer! Cursed be their morning, for its breath is groaning, and cursed be their evening, for its dew is blood! Cursed be the earth that shakes beneath them, and cursed the heaven that frowns on them!” “Depart, cursing and accursed,” said the abbot, “and con over thy blasphemies with him from whom thou hast learned them.”

The rope was twined round the neck of the victim, the executioners pulled with their full strength, placing each one his foot against the clustered pillars of the door.—Some of the revellers had the cruelty to hold a torch full in the face of the victim. There was a slight convulsion, a brief tremor, a

gush of perspiration that dyed face, neck, and hands of a livid hue; the next moment the rope broke, and the deacon fell on the floor apparently lifeless. He was raised instantly, and there was a kind of sportful strife among the assistants. "He is dead," said one; "he is not dead," was the reply. "How can he be dead when the rope has scarce left a mark on his neck? Can mere imaginings work so strongly, or hath the rope done its office sooner on him as an heretic?"—"Ye know nought," said Rusbriquis, "of the flittings of life in extremity, toward and forward, like a flame hovering on and off the wick of a lamp;—and still less wot ye how habituated savours will cause the vanished soul to return to her dwelling like a bird to its spray, when limed with such sweet poison—for a proof," applying the savour of a richly-composed dish to the nostrils of the deacon, whose associations immediately testified the power of the luscious condiment and the sagacity of the traveller. He sneezed, opened his eyes, and extended his

hand towards the dish as if instinctively.—
“Look that the rope be stronger, and that ye ply it well,” said the abbot; “this heretic fox shall yield us sport at another chace.”—“Lord abbot,” said Rusbriquis, who, if not more humane, was at least more considerate, “may not this fellow, who seems a leader in this pestilent heresy, deliver some secrets touching them that may prove a ransom for his worthless life? Men say that Raymond of Toulouse is again in France, and that the Crusaders have fled before him.”—“Thy counsel is good,” said the mock abbot, “such report hath reached us, and I would give my mitre to hear how our jolly abbot hath fared in the encounter: perchance his mitre hath been found of as brittle matter as ours—Speak, fellow, for thy life, and divulge to us what thou knowest?”

This injunction was repeated several times to the stupefied deacon before he could hear or understand it; but when he did, in that agony of mind which makes the pretenders to religion set a frantic and exaggerated value on

that life which it was their habit to speak of with lofty disregard, he eagerly offered to disclose important matter, if *his* were spared. "Important matter," said the abbot, "we list not to hear; our royaume of misrule prizes but two commodities — old wines and youthful paramours:—touching the former we count thee ill-provided, for, perchance, thou hast never till this night tasted it;—for the latter, thou may'st win mercy by being our purveyor—speak for ransom of thy life: knowest thou a heretic damsel worthy of a churchman's love?" "In all the land," said Mephibosheth, "there is no woman so fair as Genevieve, the daughter of Pierre the pastor—of all the daughters of men there is none to compare with her for comeliness and wisdom, for gracious favour and goodly gifts."—"And canst thou win this priceless demoiselle, to share our reign of Misrule with us?" said the abbot.—"Of a truth," gasped the deacon,—“the women and the weak ones journey in the van, and it may be that I may lead, if life be spared, where they can be

found, and, peradventure, led away into captivity even as the Syrians went out by companies, and took away a little damsel who waited on Naaman's wife."—"She shall minister to Naaman, not his wife," quoth the abbot; "and on such condition do we spare thy life; but mark me, heretic, that life depends on its fulfilment.—Doth thy accursed creed allow of an oath to bind thee withal?"—The unfortunate wretch uttered an oath the most tremendous and inviolable, and in so doing fell prostrate and exhausted again at the feet of the abbot.

His swoon did not interrupt their festivity long, but several days elapsed before the fever that was the consequence of the terror, agony, and excitement of the unfortunate deacon, enabled him to undertake the accomplishment of his promise, by leading a band of monks in the direction he had indicated.

CHAPTER XV.

Thou tree of covert and of rest,
For this young bird that is distrest ;
Amid thy branches safe he lay,
And he was free to sport and play,
While falcons were abroad for prey.

WORDSWORTH.

THE danger to which the unprotected females of the Albigenses were exposed, from this meditated assault, was tenfold increased by circumstances that had since occurred without their knowledge, or even that of their persecutors. The Bishop of Toulouse seized, with prompt hand and watchful eye, the moment when the hopeless state of Count de Montfort, (who still lay at the castle of Courtenaye in a state of stupor, his wounds healing, but his faculties and physical power totally annihilated,) and the dispersion of the Crusaders, in the equally hopeless pursuit of the lady Isabelle, left a

powerful disposable force of men-at-arms in his hands ;—the Countess de Montfort, herself, compromising her jealousy of her husband's honour in her zeal for the cause, and giving up the command of those she led to the bishop, while Sir Aymer promised his aid the moment he was able to bear his armour, and sit his war-saddle (and his influence was too extensive to be despised), and the vassals of de Courtenaye were armed, and impatient for action. He seized, moreover, the opportunity to direct and dispose of this force, by representing to the court of Rome that the cause had been ruined in France by the madness of the champion of the Church, and the ascetic apathy and inoperative neutrality of the monk of Montcalm ; that the reins dropt so suddenly, by an unskilful and desperate hand, must instantly be seized by a powerful and active one, or the race would be run and the goal won by the antagonist. He prayed forgiveness of the holy father for his over-confidence in the measure of putting himself at the head of what remained of the

crusading army in Languedoc, in terms that rather courted praise for his courage, than pardon for his temerity; and ere it was possible that his couriers could have reached the Vatican, the bishop had placed himself at the head of all the men-at-arms, who still sojourned in the castle of Courtenaye, or its neighbourhood, and set forth against the retreating army of Count Raymond of Toulouse. Such were the terrors that impended over the heretics: but of these they were as yet ignorant. On the night following that of the further retreat of the Albigeois into the fastnesses of the mountains, Genevieve, with trembling heart and limbs, after the pastor had composed himself to rest, sought the cave where the wounded Crusader lay. The path was so intricate and tangled that she had less to fear pursuit or detection than the possibility of retracing her steps again; and to have seen her slender form and delicate limbs as she struggled through entwining weeds, matted brushwood, and interlaced and slowly disparting branches of trees;

and then tremulously placed her slender foot on the stony path which often betrayed it, one might have imagined her a banished oread or dryad tremblingly haunting the scene of her former sylvan existence.

Through all obstructions, however, her slender form and resolute will made way : she reached the cave—he raised the thick foliage of wild ivy and clematis that embowered its entrance—she entered, but there was no one there—no trace even of the wounded knight, no fragment of armour or shred of scarf or plume showed he had ever been an inmate there. She paused for a moment in amazement not unmixed with terror, and both were increased by observing the entrance of the cave darkened by the figure of a man who approached her—it was Amand. He did not speak, but he gazed on her intently, and a smile which she trembled at, severed his lips for a moment—“What hast thou done?” she said fearfully—“Oh! what hast thou done with the wounded knight?—Where have you borne him—or is he indeed yet alive?”—

“Canst thou misdeem of me as that voice would imply?” said Amand, with impassioned reproachfulness—“I cannot behold aught pitied by thee that I do not pity, or aided by thee that I would not aid. Last night I lingered behind thee to bear the wounded knight to fitter shelter;—I pulled the leaves for his bed, and bound his wounds, and spread my own garment over him where he lies;—but, oh! Genevieve, I felt two hearts in my bosom. I could,” he added, “even while I bore his body in mine arms, have dashed it against the rock, when I thought of the look with which thou didst gaze on it last night.”—“Alas!” said the maiden, shrinking from his vehemence, “tell me, at least, where you have borne him, that I may myself minister to him—men tend not men with that gentleness that women can—nor do ye bear those thousand waywardnesses which break from a spirit galled with the body’s sufferings; nor know ye to invent and apply those petty cares and nameless comforts that are to the sufferer more than the drugs of many skilled

leeches.”—“ I doubt not thou wilt be a tender nurse,” said Amand sullenly ; “ but are there none to be tended among thine own people, that thou seekest to minister to an alien and idolater.”

“ If I tend the afflicted of mine own people,” answered Genevieve, “ what do I more than others? but if I bind up the wounds of the enemy of my faith and my life, that faith alone can supply the motive—or the reward.” “ Thou deceivest thine own heart, Genevieve,” said the youth, shaking his head ; “ but though thou canst not deceive me, thou canst overcome by thy pleadings. Better were it for man never to contend in words with woman, for she will prevail by that sweet wilfulness that makes reason a mock to itself ; so I will lead thee where lies this wounded knight, and, oh ! may he inflict on his leech no hurt more deadly than those thou canst heal !”

He beckoned her to follow him as he spoke, and Genevieve followed trembling, anxious and silent, to a deeper recess in the woody glen than she had hitherto explored. “ Why

dost thou pause?" said Amand abruptly as they reached its darkest part; "the object of thy care is here,"—he flung back the boughs that closed: and she found that Amand had not exaggerated his good offices. He had removed him to a deserted hut, such as the shepherds in mountainous regions erect during the summer season, and leave on the approach of autumn, when they drive the flocks lower into the valleys: it was concealed from the Albigenes by the approach being thickly matted with brushwood and weeds, and was provided within with a heap of dried leaves, and a woollen garment. Stretched on these lay the body of the young knight; and Genevieve saw with gratitude, that the long and clustering hair had been cut away from his forehead, and that the wound he had received was such as to cause deep stupefaction without peril either to life or reason: that on his bosom caused still less alarm, for Genevieve was mistress of all the vulnerary medicaments of the age, and, presaging hopefully of his recovery, she applied salves and bandages to both,

(the patient giving no signs of existence save faint tossings and low mutterings), and then implored of Amand to conduct her to the same spot every night, till the wounded youth was restored to his strength. "Genevieve, thou triest me too hardly," said the young Albigeois, sternly; "I have done more than man hath ever done—I have borne more than man—more than I can bear; I have seen thee, when I parted to mortal fight, tearless—I have seen thee weep over mine enemy and thine."—"It is so sweet to save an enemy's life," murmured Genevieve.—"An enemy's, indeed!" said the jealous youth. "If the pale and pleading beauty of those light locks and pearl-like skin won thine eye, even when he lay as one dead before thee, how will they seem when he appears before thee in all the loveliness of life, blushing with gratitude and blessing his preserver? Then, deluded maiden!—then will his enmity prove most perilous and most deadly!"

Genevieve, alarmed by his agitation, but wholly unconscious of its cause, averted her

head in silence; her pure heart suggested to her but one motive for her compassion, and she was unable even to comprehend those which were alluded to by Amand. Her gesture was mistaken by him: he imagined she was dwelling in cherishing silence over the picture he had drawn, and he passionately exclaimed, "This is the last night I will visit this spot with thee!"—"Then I must visit it alone," said the maiden.—"And wilt thou dare to visit it alone?" said Amand.—"I dare do aught but neglect a life left to my sole tendance:—if thou *canst* desert me, I will win my way as I may; yet thou wilt regret thou wast not here to aid me with thy better strength, and, perchance, to smoothe that rugged path to my bleeding feet."—"And wouldst thou wish, wouldst thou suffer me to be present at thy meeting with this—stranger?" cried Amand, his jealousy half dictating, half forbidding the question.—"Alas! did I not solicit it?" said Genevieve, in the simplicity of her heart. Amand made no answer but by twining her arm in his

and, as he led her away, muttering between his closed teeth, "Thou most tormenting, delicious being! thy simplicity sometimes showing like subtlest art, and thy sole art being true simplicity—thou canst do aught and all thou wilt with me, making me slave to my very victim,—and," glancing back at the spot they were quitting,—“perchance a victim to my very slave!”

From this period, the visits of Genevieve to the wounded knight were unremitting; and her care was at length rewarded by seeing him in safety, though unable either to recognize or thank her. Every evening it was her task to conceal part of the provisions, which, from the liberality with which they were now supplied, could be done without detection—to prepare her simple materials for dressing and binding his wounds—then, as twilight was fading into night, to steal forth to his retreat, watching every sound, and shrinking from every object, till she gained the spot, and, with broken respiration and palpitating heart, sunk on the floor beside her patient; then to apply the food to

his lips, to chafe his numbed limbs, to attempt to add ease to his posture and comfort to his retreat, repaid her for all danger and weariness, till the few moments that she could allot to her visit had elapsed, and she hasted to return, trembling, but glowing; anxious, but elated. The contemplation of this visit became a dream of delightful anticipations all day, and its performance the cherished solace of the evening.

That delicious picture of secret contemplation—that “joy of its own which the heart knoweth and a stranger doth not intermeddle with”—that hidden treasure which we retire to contemplate and sum in secret with a miser’s joy and a miser’s jealousy—is above all the enjoyments that ever were generalized by participation, or weakened by diffusion. Could mortal eye have beheld them, they would have presented a sight like that described in lines of mystical and magic beauty,

* * * * *

Where young Adonis oft reposes,

Waxing well of his deep wound

In slumber soft,—and on the ground

• Sadly sits th’ Assyrian queen:—

while Amand stood the sullen, jealous sentinel of these moments, ever warning Genevieve that they had elapsed almost from their commencement — ever menacing her with the consequences during their hurried return, and often withholding his aid from her faltering steps, in jealous waywardness of spirit. Meanwhile, the damp confinement, and want of all accommodation suited to his state, delayed the perfect recovery of the knight long beyond the time that his youth and vigour promised, and in spite of the skill and assiduity of the leech ; and it was not till the fourteenth evening of her visits that her patient seemed to evince some touch of consciousness, and feebly to attempt to discover and thank his visitor. That night an autumnal blast had strewed her path ankle-deep with leaves, which heavy rains had converted into mire ; the roof of branches had been torn off the hut, and Genevieve trembled as she approached it, lest the storm should have disturbed the sufferer. To her astonishment she found him with both faculties and speech

restored, and anxious to be led forth into the light even of the frowning and stormy heaven, murmuring, as he tossed on his bed of leaves, that nothing could restore his health but the free open air of heaven.

“And thou shalt breathe it, if mine arm have power to support thee,” said Genevieve. —“Is it the touch of mortal or spirit that I feel pressing my burning brow with such delicious coolness?” answered the knight; “it feels like a wreath of fresh flowers around mine head.” —“Angels do not now visit the desert,” said Genevieve, “as they did in the days of holy men of old: our sins have banished those heavenly visitants;—it is a mortal who supports thee.” —“If I may judge by the clear music of thy voice, and the silky softness of thy touch,” said the youth, “doubtless one of a noble race.” —“Of the very humblest of fallen mortality,” answered Genevieve, with a firm sadness: “a peasant maiden; one to whom a noble knight would blush to owe a courtesy, and a Crusader would think it foul scorn to be in-

debted, even for life." She spoke with deep emotion ; for, by the stronger light, as they approached the rude aperture that served for door, she recognized in the wounded knight the youth who had preserved her the night she had been seized on, and she anticipated the effect which the disclosure of her birth and religion must have on a knight and a Crusader. " I understand thee," said the knight : " thou art of that unhappy faith which——" " Which teaches me, wherever good can be wrought, or mercy shown, not to pause to ask who is my neighbour," said Genevieve, forgetting that this scriptural allusion was probably lost on the hearer.—" Thy faith, whether true or false," said the knight, smiling faintly, " owes me somewhat, even the preservation of a fair female heretic from the assault of ruffians, who menaced not, in truth, her life, but might have left her nought to prize in the life they spared. Mine arm," he added, reclining on the support of Genevieve, who proffered it more tenderly than ever—" mine arm was stronger

then ; yet still, I think, it could fell to earth aught that approached with touch of maculation that holy beauty.”—“Dost thou remember her?” said Genevieve, in a voice scarce audible ; “could a peasant damsel fling such spell over the memory of a noble knight and a Crusader?”—“On my bed of leaves,” said the youth, “that vision was with me. Oh, so lofty was her demeanour—so sweet and thrilling her voice—so purified and earth-abstracted the whole saintly vision, that I have sometimes thought an angel had descended among the heretics and worn her form, to win them back to heaven ! Now, mock me if thou wilt, damsel ; but in my wanderings I have often thought that a voice like her’s breathed in my ears—that a hand like her’s smoothed my bed of leaves—that *she* was with me in my lonely wretchedness.”—“She was with thee, she is with thee, she thanks, she blesses her preserver, but never, never can she repay him.” And, as she spoke, Genevieve threw back the hood that had hitherto concealed

her features, and the full glory of that face to which earth had given its noblest modulation, and heaven its holiest character and expression, burst on the eyes of Amirald.

He gazed on them intently for a moment, then clasping his hands, attempted to bend his knee in the attitude of worship, but his strength failed in the effort, and he fell prostrate at her feet. Terrified at this prostration, which she ascribed to his weakness, Genevieve was attempting to raise him, when the voice and eager gestures of Amand, who was rapidly descending from a hill, announced to her that not a moment was to be lost. Genevieve, accustomed to these pulses of terror, caught the hand extended to her, and casting one look of regret behind her, followed Amand, till her failing steps and broken respiration made him pause from compassion, which she had not breath to solicit. "There is danger and disaster in thy speed," said his panting companion at length, "nor dare I ask what it is this fearful haste announces."—"Men say that the

Bishop of Toulouse approaches with a mighty host," said Amand hastily, "and messengers have come from Count Raymond, commanding that the women and the children be sent farther into the mountains till this evil be overpast; and half I rejoice," he added in a voice of constrained passion, "at these hasty and fearful tidings, for now must thou see this stranger no more, nor shall mine eyes waste in their sockets beholding your meetings; ere morning, distance and deserts will be between you."—"But that will not deprive him of thy aid?" said Genevieve: "Now know I of an assured surety, that thou wilt not desert him, for never was good deed coupled with peril but it seemed lovelier in the eye of the brave."—"Thy flattering words win me not," said Amand obdurately; "I fear the wrath of the congregation because of him. Shall I become an Achan and a troubler of the camp for this stranger, because his favour is fairer than mine? Knowest thou not, that they who aid our enemies in any wise are cursed with a

curse?"—"It is vain for man to curse what God hath blessed," said the maiden; "there is a prior and unwritten law of love and mercy in thy heart, Amand, which thou mayest neglect but canst not efface; what is enjoined in that law? how readest thou?"—"I see how it fares with thee," said Amand, his eyes flashing with a fire visible even in the increasing darkness of twilight—"I see how it fares with thee; thou hast loved strangers, and after them wilt thou go. Neither distance nor danger, impassable paths nor the terrors of night, the prayers of thy friend nor the wrath of thy people, can avail to withhold thee from forsaking the guide of thy youth, and forgetting the covenant of thy God."

Affrighted at his violence, and wounded by his reproaches, Genevieve forbore to plead, and at this moment the murmurs of many voices in various accents of alarm, grief, and anxiety, announced to her fresh cause for concentrating her resolution, and banishing all cares but those of meeting the present

emergency. It was a night of tumult, terror, and distress to the unfortunate Albigenses, the feeble and female part of whom were preparing, on the approach of night, and amid the stormy gloom of autumn, to penetrate farther into the mountain fastnesses, and seek amid the haunts of the wolf and the bear, that shelter which was denied them in the abodes of man. Their progress, however, was checked by another messenger from Count Raymond, requiring that all the males capable of bearing arms should immediately repair to his camp, as the forces of the Crusaders, headed by the Bishop of Toulouse, were fast approaching, and threatened to intercept all communication between him and the advanced body of the Albigenses. This order, with which it was indispensable in the present exigency to comply, completed the despair of the unfortunate women, as it deprived them not only of guides and protectors in the "howling wilderness" they were about to traverse, but of those to whom they were entwined by every tie of nature and of

passion : husbands took brief and sad leave of wives, and parents of children, committing them to Him, whom they invoked to be their pillar of flame in the desert; and the cries of warlike preparation and solemn intercession were heard on every side, mingled with the wailings of unappeasable mothers, and the ceaseless moan of scared and wearied infancy. Amid the tumult, Amand invented a thousand causes of delay (for which his courage was not overpraised), till his topical knowledge, eminently serviceable amid scenes like these, where wild and perilous exigencies were to be encountered only by as wild and perilous expedients, had enabled him to recognize a spot where his adventurous step had often scaled alone, and where no force of man could reach those who had obtained access to it. It was a perpendicular rock which closed the extremity of the gorge or ravine, which they had reached in their dismal progress : it was ascendible only on one side by a stony path broken by many interruptions; and this path, which wound

like a natural stair to the summit, was so overshadowed by bowery plants of laurel, and genistum, and weedy tufts of lavender, and thyme, and ivy, that tapestried all the rock, as to be invisible to all eyes but those of the restless pursuer of Nature into her deepest loneliness. On the summit there was a level space of considerable extent, in front of which the rock rose like a parapet or the battlements of a castle, and above towered another clothed with fir and pine, its summit presenting a chance of escape or shelter even to those to whom this fortress, hewed by Nature's own hand, should prove not impregnable. The moment Amand pointed out this retreat, Genevieve implored him no longer to delay hasting to join the forces of Count Raymond. Amand viewed her with a doubtful eye and a bitter smile, and then hastened with the utmost exertions of his strength, and the most fearless risk of his own safety, to conduct her companions to the summit. Genevieve was last; as he aided her to ascend, he

whispered, "One word, only one word with thee."—"Aid the feeble and those who need thee," said Genevieve, trying to ascend without his assistance.—"Thou *shalt* hear me," said the impetuous boy, grasping her arm.—"Well, then I must," replied the maiden trembling; "but what is it thou wouldst say?"—"For thee," said Amand, in a choked and agonizing voice, "for thee have I perilled life, soul, and what I value more, thank thy new creed of chivalry for the lore."—"I understand not thy words," said the affrighted maiden.—"Understand this, then," replied Amand; "I have perilled my life to find shelter for thee, for what step but mine could have scaled this rock? I have perilled my soul, for I have concealed thy backsliding from the congregation, who would have burnt thee with fire had they known that thy pity had watched over a Crusader; and I have perilled more than both, for I have been as a coward in the eyes of men and of women, to find a place of safety and shelter for thee; and mine eyes are opened and I see

that valour is all that women prize in man, and, in yielding me a coward, and one that shrunk from the battle, I have done that for which thou owest me dear recompense."

—"Thy words bewilder me," said the maiden: "an evil and troubled spirit seems to speak from within thee; I pray let me ascend this steep."—"Not a grice till I have named my recompense. I am going to perish in the desperate battle, from which thy late remorse cannot save me: for all I have done, for all I shall yet do, if action be available in this life, or intercession effectual in the other, grant me but this—promise that thou wilt visit that stranger no more."—"Surely I will not promise it," said Genevieve, "for in so doing, I should sin against mine own soul." As she spoke, Amand seized her arm, and hurried her up to the summit of that terrassed rock, without speaking a word or remitting his speed for a moment.

Genevieve stood at last on the summit, panting and tottering as he released her—"Thou wilt not promise?" he repeated in a

voice scarce articulate; "Genevieve, I and the stranger are on a precipice—one of us must be flung from it to save the other—shall it be I, or thy minion?—choose while a moment's choice is allowed thee." The blast of a horn, floating far on the hills, was heard as he spoke; it was the signal for departure: all the fires of hell seemed to blaze in his visage, as exclaiming, "Thou wilt *not* speak, then the choice is mine," he darted from the cliff, and was lost to her sight in a moment. This moment was one of exquisite anguish to Genevieve: she began, for the first time, to fear that she had carried her gratitude to the Crusader too far; and her imagination tormented her with the fear, that this gratitude might be exposing him to dangers greater than those she had saved him from; but her feelings, never habituated to dwell on *self*, found speedy and ample employment in soothing the terrors and hushing the murmurs of her hapless companions. No situation could indeed be more desolate than theirs: perched like hunted birds on a bare rock, which,

though it afforded concealment, gave no shelter; deprived of their guides and protectors, uncertain how long their absence might continue; and trembling lest the event of another hour might make it eternal, these unhappy women had still an aggravation of their sufferings—the want of that excitation that had now become the habit of their existence, the food and fuel of their hearts—the want of the prolonged evening exhortation, the choral hymn, the enthusiastic anticipations of their final triumph, and, not less welcome, the denunciations of prophetic vengeance against their enemies; the agony of prayer, the simultaneous spreading out of hands, as if to take heaven by storm; the accordant murmur of a thousand voices, like the rush of mighty waters; the pause more awful than that human thunder in its loudest bursts—the want, in effect, of all that forms to weak but susceptible and highly-excited minds, what may be called the drama of devotion, and stands in place of the usual employments and relaxations of life, which the

enthusiast is compelled by his creed to resign. The want of this pressed sore on the wearied and dejected spirits of the helpless women.

It was at this moment that Genevieve, who had often been accustomed to give the word of exhortation in the absence of the Barbes, and always to lead the hymn, in which her voice, whether in supplication or in praise, seemed to "sing at heaven's gate," suggested to her companions the seasonableness of fervent prayer. She reminded them of the night when Paul and Silas prayed and sung praises in a dungeon; and during the holy conflict, *every man's chains were loosened*; they acquiesced, and the holy maiden burst into a spontaneous effusion, that was in truth more like the outpouring of the spirit on the handmaids, than words uttered by "mortal mixture of earth's mould;" but among her trembling and heartless auditory, there was no voice, nor any that answered: one was intent on hushing a wearied infant, another on tending a sick one, many were shivering

with cold, and all with terror; some were stupified into dumbness and apathy, and those who could yet feel or speak, felt or uttered but one wish, "Would God it were morning." With such a congregation, a Miriam must have failed; she might strike the chords of inspiration, but there was no daughter of Israel to follow her in the song.

She sung, they found no comfort in her song;
She pray'd to strengthen them, they were not strong.

MONTGOMERY.

Repulsed, but not wearied, she turned to the children, and soothing some by caresses, and calming all by the tones of a voice whose speech was music, she succeeded in diffusing a momentary tranquillity among the most querulous; the wearied children at last slept; their mothers slept also. Genevieve seized this moment to examine what possible defence their present dreary position offered: she saw that the rock, a natural breast-work, rose as high as the battlements of a castle in front of the terrace they occupied; and she observed that several of the stones which formed this

parapet were loose, many of them having fallen from the cliff above; and others being retained in their place only by the weeds that mantled between the apertures, and the clay and sand which rains had swept from the upper cliff and lodged in the numerous interstices, and might therefore prove a means of defence, or at least of desperate menace, should they be assailed from below. While thus occupied, her failure in that eloquence of consolation and inspiration of prayer, which had so often soothed and elevated the congregation to whom, in such moments, her face was as the face of an angel, struck her with melancholy force; and she shed a few tears less for the loss of her powers, than for the privation that loss must cause to others. "Perhaps," said she, "it is a just rebuke to my spiritual pride; I, who sought to be a mother in Israel, must learn to be mute and helpless: but *Thou* who canst give waters in the wilderness, though thou hast dried up this brook, thou canst cause the stones of these rocks to cry out, the floods of the

valleys to clap their hands, the trees of these mighty forests to break forth into singing, and the very stars in their course, though they have neither speech nor language, to cause a voice to be heard among them." Thoughts like these, solemn as the hour and pure as its light, began to visit her soul; her meditations became more intense, her thoughts more elevated—she gazed upwards, and wondered at her fears and weakness. Before the power whose visible agency surrounded her on every side, all other power shrunk into nought; before the thoughts that filled her soul, all other thoughts or cares seemed a profanation and vanity; one bright gleam of consolation rose on her after another, as stars arise in the night, till her whole soul glowed within her, and her mind became as resplendent with internal light, as the midnight heaven was with the numerous glory of all the stellar fires. In this holy frame, amid peril and privation, in a desert, and at midnight, she sunk into a slumber that seemed like a continuation of the rapt and trance-like mood that

had preceded it—the same visions hovered in it, and she felt, as she reviewed their images, like a traveller who looks on the same landscape in sunshine and in twilight. From this slumber she started with the feeling of one never accustomed to rest long, or to awake in safety, and perceived her companions already roused. It was day-light, but a heavy mist hung on the mountains, and lay like an ocean in the valleys; sounds of steps were heard approaching, but the thickness of the vapour rendered those sounds obtuse and confused, while it prevented the possibility of their discovering who were approaching. All, however, agreed in encouraging each other to believe they were friends; while each concealed in her heart a fear that contradicted her expressions; but when the mist yielded gradually to the increasing light, the figures of the deacon and of a few others mounted on mules, and wrapped in long cloaks, appeared at the foot of the precipice.

CHAPTER XVI.

Woe worth, woe worth ye, Jock my man,
I paid ye well yeer fee,
Why pu' ye out the ground-wa' stane,
Lets in the reek to me.
Ye paid me well my hire, Ladyc,
Ye paid me well my fee,
But now I'm Edom of Gordon's man,
And I maun do or dee.

Edom of Gordon.

GENEVIEVE gazed on the former with amazement, as he eagerly recognized her, and testified by uncouth gestures his pleasure at the interview. "If the mountain mists, or the spirits who are said to raise and rule them, have not abused my sight," said she, "thou art Mephibosheth the deacon."—"Of a truth am I damsel?" said the deacon, "and I pray thee to tell me how I may climb

up to thy place of strength, which is unto thee as the high hills to the goats, that so I may speak words of counsel and of comfort unto thee."

"Thine absence hath been so long, and its cause so strange," said Genevieve, "that I would rather first hear what thou hast to tell, and whether thou comest as friend or foe."—"Surely, as a friend," said the deacon, "and, 'as a brother is born for adversity,' so come I to warn thee of peril thou mayest best avert by submission, not by defiance; for, behold, the man whom they call the Bishop of Toulouse, is come up against ye, and he vaunteth of his strength and of his mighty deeds, and he saith of Beziers and Carcassonne and all fenced cities where the brethren fought and perished, 'Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad, and of Sepharvaim?'"

"Thou dost well," answered Genevieve, with holy indignation, "to borrow thy menace from the mouth of that idolatrous king, who

in his arrogance, threatened not man but heaven. Remember also the answer given to him, and take it for mine—to Him who inspired that answer of old, to Him who can inspire it even now, I refer thee—even Him who in one night turned the host into dead corpses, and caused him to perish in the house of his idol gods, and by the hands of those whose parricide, while it punished his guilt, filled up the measure of their own: but for thee—for thee, Mephibosheth, whose lips should have kept knowledge, who should have been a stay to the weak, a shelter to the weary—how shall I read thy words aright, or believe, indeed, it is thou who utterest them?” — “Even as thou wilt,” said the deacon—“yet to thee they are words of truth and of safety. Can the rock afford thee shelter, or can it give thee food? Wilt thou abide there till thou famish, till the vultures peck at thee and the bears howl round thee, and thou faint for lack of water? Behold, a city of refuge is open to

thee—even the Abbey of Normoutier, where thou shalt eat of the fat and drink of the sweet, and whither I, even I, am come to lead thee. Wherefore should women delight in the sound of the trumpet and the alarm of war?"

"Mephibosheth," said the maiden, "I ever held thee earthly and sensual, but now do I deem thee devilish; for surely, unless it be a minister of the evil one who is permitted to assume thy form, thou speakest words which befit none but his servant. Wast thou a master in Israel, and is such thy counsel to the daughters of the captivity?"—"Where is the confidence wherein thou trustest," said the deacon, abashed and incensed at the firmness of a woman contrasted with his own apostacy and vacillation: "I tell thee, those who have built their nest in a rock, have been humbled to the dust, and shalt thou be delivered? The mighty and the eloquent have been abashed and put to silence—a Moses hath erred with his lips, an Aaron hath yielded to the sin of the congregation, and

shall a Miriam alone strike her timbrel and sound praises to her own constancy and courage? Daughter of pride, come down and sit in the dust : thou shalt be like one of us—thou shalt be weak as we are. Bow, ere the golden sceptre is changed for the rod of iron.”

“It shall crush me in pieces first,” answered the maiden ; “even on the timid ears and failing hearts of women, thy base eloquence of fear hath failed of its power. From their hold of the rock, from where they battle with the eagle for his eyry, and with the fox for his den, women defy and despise thee. But oh, Mephibosheth, what depth of scorn must she feel, what bitterness of reproach should she utter, who rememberest what thou once wast ! Is it *thou* who comest to snatch away the support of Aaron and Hur from the uplifted arms of the prophet, even though thine own being depends on their being upheld ? to make the wheels of our chariot drive heavily, when thou shouldst lay thine utmost strength to the load ?—to trouble the host, when thou thyself shouldst

be first to show the lamp and blow the trumpet, and shout, 'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.'

The deacon shrunk before the voice, the attitude, the inspired beauty, and the sacred eloquence of the young prophetess; for such she appeared.

"The truth is with her," said he, retreating among his companions; "and I cannot contend with or prevail against it."

"On again," said one of the monks of Normoutier; "or we will goad thee on with our spurs and riding-rods to the assault."—"On, on," repeated the rest, "and seek how we may climb to this den where the heretic wolf hath hid his mate and her young. An' thou lure not down that bird of the rock, whose note is so much braver than her plumage, and teach her other song ere long, thou art but a lost deacon."

Thus urged, the unfortunate deacon once more approached the rock, at the foot of which the monks were exploring the traces of that concealed path which we have before

described. "Hear, ye wretched women," cried Mephibosheth, "deliver up this damsel to us, with the young maidens of your company, and we will depart; but if ye will not, we will heap up the ling and the dry heath, the fir-tree and the pine-tree together, and cause the flame thereof, and the smoke thereof, to go up even to your hiding-place, that ye be consumed and perish." At these words, Genevieve looked round on her companions, her features radiant with the light of pure perfect confidence. With horror, she perceived there was no animating answer of a corresponding expression. The dejected and dismayed women looked on their children and then on each other doubtfully.

"Are ye mothers?" cried Genevieve: "do ye clasp children to your bosoms, and those children daughters, and can ye hesitate? Oh, fling me rather from the spot where I stand, a crushed and breathless mass of horror at their feet, than even think for a moment on the alternative. Your crime will not be so great, and my suffering will be far, far less.

But ye do not think of it—ye cannot,” she cried, raising her voice. “No—tempter—no; all here are women, women in soul as in sex; and to those who have either soul or sex, such crime were impossible and unnatural!”

The women excited by her appeal, testified the revulsion of their feelings by a shrill and piercing scream of defiance. “What, are there none but women in that nook,” cried the loose monk, who had acted the Abbot of misrule, “and stand we at the foot of the nest, to hear the hen-birds crow in our mere defiance; up, up and seize them where they stand. Thou, deacon of the damned, ordained by Beelzebub himself, shalt climb first, and look thou show some tricks of thy old vocation in skipping from rock to rock like a chamois; we shall be nothing slack to follow, and leave these tough hens not a youngling to cackle or ruffle for.” As he spake, the monk made good his word, springing at hazard up the precipice, followed by his companions, dragging the wretched deacon along with them.

The monks were vigorous and active : they calculated every step of their perilous ascent with steady eye, sprung with light foot, and grasped with firm hand, while the deacon, after one or two premonitory suspensions over a crag, where his companions held him half in mischief, half in mockery, bounded upwards with a speed that justified his persecutors in urging him to it, and displayed an excess of grotesque activity in the effort, at once ludicrous and terrific.

Genevieve saw their progress with terror that concentrated her resolution. "Hear me," she cried, "hear me at peril of your lives! Look up at these masses of rock, so mighty that their fall must crush the children of the Anakim; so lightly poised as to yield to the touch of the feeblest woman. Advance but another step, and as He liveth in whose might I trust, and in whose spirit I speak, they shall crush your bodies into fragments, that the vulture shall utter a famished shriek as she passes by them."—"Hear me," cried the gasping deacon, "thou Zipporah;

thou Athaliah ! Art thou unsexed ; wilt thou be zealous unto slaying ?"—“ Unsexed men make women forget their sex also,” cried Genevieve : “ when the protector turns the oppressor, the unprotected forget aught but their safety ; and thou shalt feel, that woman in the cause of her faith and her honour is mightier than man assailing them.”—“ Of a verity I will not advance,” said the deacon : “ was not Abimelech, that mighty man of valour, slain under the tower of Thebez, by a stone cast by a woman ?”—“ On, thou losel !” cried the monks : “ thou mightest as well heave the Abbey of Normoutier from its foundation with thy little finger, as the slender arms of that damsel lift those rocks from their base.” They ascended, and came near. “ Now God aid me in mine extremity !” said Genevieve, applying herself to her task : “ your blood be on your own heads,” she cried ; while the united strength of her companions, joined with hers, shook, loosened, and finally detached, the vast masses of stone, which, bounding, smoking, and rattling from

crag to crag, dragging with them a forest of crashed boughs and brushwood, and sending before them a cataract of splintered rocks, and fragments of stone, trees, and clay, thundered into the valley, and sent their echoes far and wide among the mountains. With dizzy horror, Genevieve gazed on the downward progress of the ruin, and beheld, almost with a sensation of joy, the monks escape with miraculous dexterity the fate that threatened them, and stand trembling beside the course of that stony torrent as it flashed and thundered through the ravine.

They had brief space to congratulate themselves on their safety, for at this moment another danger menaced them. A large body of the Albigeois appeared on the summit of the opposite hill, and the terrified females caught an omen of hope and safety from their speedy return. To shout in joyful unison with their cry, to dart into the valley, and send a score of arrows after the fugitive assailants, who plied spur and riding-rod amain, was the work of a few minutes; and

as they sped through the valley, their eager gestures and increasing shouts testified they had been the witnesses, and were the intelligencers of some welcome event. The tidings they brought were as joyful as they were important. The Bishop of Toulouse had, indeed, put himself at the head of the remains of the crusading army, but the military followers of the fallen Crusaders had deserted almost universally, as was the custom of the age, when they were no longer commanded by their individual leaders; every man making his best speed to gain the territory or castle of his fallen or wounded lord, and leaving the bishop to meet the Count of Toulouse at the head of troops flushed with recent victory, with a band of unorganized and disarrayed vassals, instead of men-at-arms. King Philip besides, who on the throne of France trembled at the power, character, and views of the ambitious prelate, refused to recognize him as champion of the Church in place of Simon de Montfort, till his title was admitted by the court of Rome. The missives

from Rome were hourly expected, but the bishop not brooking the delay, and hoping to awe both the King of France and the Pope by the promptitude of his movements, and the rapidity of his success, had forced his diminished army through the mountain passes, and encountered so severe a check from the advanced troops of Count Raymond, that he was compelled to retreat again towards his episcopal castle and city of Beaucaire, and there await aid from the Crusaders. The way was thus left free for the movement of the females and children towards Arragon; but the Count had, in the mean time, been apprised that the King of Arragon had been excited to strong hostility against the Albigeois, by the missives of the bishop; and stimulated by the exhortations of the preachers who outnumbered and outvoiced the military men of his host, he entertained the hope of again becoming the lord of his native territories, establishing the heresy, as it was termed, within the walls of Toulouse, and rebuilding Carcassonne and Beziers.

To effect this work, the preachers, amongst whom the foremost were Mattathias and Boanerges, assured him a day of fast and supplication was necessary ; and to this, after their more favourable intelligence had been communicated, the party came to summon and conduct the females, whom it was no longer necessary to keep at a distance from the main body.

According to the habits of the community, a summons to a solemn act of humiliation and fasting was deemed, even by the females, like an invitation to a festival.

Not Deborah uttering her inspired song to a host of triumphant warriors, not Judith calling the elders of Bethulia to the gate to witness the event of her daring deed, felt more pride than these females, lately so persecuted and bewildered, when they heard of the solemn assembly which they were about to join under the protection of their relatives, and in the security of brief tranquillity.

Genevieve alone, who retained in a memory

rendered more faithful by the energy of her character, and the intensity of her feelings even when a child, the images of the horrors of Beziers and Carcassonne, shuddered at the thought of the desperate effort to establish the rights of the Count of Toulouse, and the exercise of the persecuted faith in his territorial city; and while she joined the train which now wound slowly and in safety down the precipice, foreseeing nothing but danger arising from courage, and calamity overtaking success, she wished "for the wings of a dove that she might flee away and be at rest." She felt, as all that are deeply religious must feel, that its exercise should be calm and tranquil, a "communing with the heart and in the chamber," and a "being still;" nor was she a little disturbed at the thought of being produced as the heroine of her party, for an effort which her habitual timidity made her almost consider as a crime, now that her spirits had subsided, and her mind had lost the high tone it was strung to in that emergency.

The hints of this had already reached her; and when, with the acclamations of all the females, Arnaud placed her on his mule, while two men-at-arms of Count Raymond rode beside her, and Amand purposely entangled his hand in her rein that he might be near her, she shrunk from their hold, and whispered her wish to Arnaud.

“It shall not be so,” said Arnaud, in answer, “why art thou disquieted, damsel? Behold the women shall go before thee with songs and with dances, and they shall praise thee with the praise of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, because thou hast smitten the enemy by the hand of a woman; also the old man thy father, behold he is yet alive, and he shall bless thee with many blessings, because thou hast been strong and very courageous for the truth, passing the strength of woman.”

“Then I shall be blessed,” said Genevieve; “for I say to thee, reverend Arnaud, that one blessing from lips that tremble with affection—from lips that perchance may be closed

ere they utter another, were to me worth the shout of the congregation, even of a very great multitude."

Amand, who had not spoken till then, but walked patiently beside her rein, said eagerly but whisperingly to her, "Haste then, if thou wouldst have his blessing."—"What meanest thou?" said Genevieve.—"Nothing: I mean nothing—I *am* nothing, nothing in thy eyes; but, reverend Arnaud, art thou sure that the damsel will, indeed, be greeted with a blessing, even the blessing of Pierre the pastor?"

He spoke in a tone that made Genevieve tremble and Arnaud regard him with a look of consternation. "If it be so," he added, gnashing his teeth, "may I be accursed—but that I am already! Go, go," he continued flinging back the rein, "go and see what blessing awaits thee: go and see if even Pierre will bless thee."

CHAPTER XVII.

A sentence ; come, prepare !

Merchant of Venice.

THEY journeyed all that day in safety ; and about its close, their way, winding round a rock, suddenly disclosed to Genevieve and her companions a view of the valley where the Albigeois had assembled on what they termed their holy convocation, and which the preachers named the Valley of Jehoshaphat. It was now evening, and the shadows of the mountains had struck far into the valley, shedding the gloom of twilight over the dark and mingled groups who were assembled under its shadows. The solemn exercise, which had commenced with daylight, was still carried on : those who had breath and perse-

verance for the task were still pursuing it, and those who had not could yet add their gasping Hallelujah, or their faint So be it, to the petition which they could no longer hear. The valley where the Albigeois were assembled was one intersected by a narrow stream, increased by many rills from the surrounding mountains. Some spots in the valley were clothed with rich verdure and vegetation even in Autumn; many more were desolate and bare: the stony and broken path that wandered through the valley was sometimes obstructed by water, sometimes by broken branches of trees, and oftener by fragments of rocks that had fallen from the hills above;—but wherever a spot was to be found where two or three might gather together, there were the pastors, or Barbes, exhorting and praying; the congregation bearing audible response, and frequently leading the devotions they should have followed. The teachers were as diversified as their respective groups of listeners: the veterans of Count Raymond's army, who were of the

newly-adopted creed, enforcing it on their hearers with all the authority of established preachers, yet sometimes finding that authority shaken or questioned by some young champion in the lists of theology. Thus amid the centre of one group was to be seen a mailed warrior, his helm and visor doffed, his grey beard floating over his armed chest, his hand on a parchment scroll containing the New Testament, explaining it to a group of hearers; while all his allusions and analogies, according to his own construction, were drawn from the Jewish Scriptures;—while a beardless youth, cased in arms, would hold deep controversy with him, till the distracted audience knew not how to decide between the young Daniel come to judgment, and the masters in Israel, who were charged with not knowing these things. In another group the Barbes were seen with their woollen garments, their hoods resembling those of monks and their long beards: these were more dogmatical and imperative than their lay coadjutors. They hushed every murmur, permit-

ted no voices to be heard but their own, and by their powerful intonation, eager gesture, and denunciatory vehemence, seemed to exercise as absolute authority over their congregation as the power which they denounced and execrated could have aspired to in its utmost ambition of spiritual domination.

The visages of all these men were marked with the strongest lines of fanaticism and military enthusiasm combined. Cowl and helmet, when withdrawn, showed the same deep and stern character : some were distinguished by religious austerity, others by martial ferocity ; but all bore the traces of long and severe suffering—all announced wounds of the heart or of the brain—all spoke of that hope deferred which maketh the heart sick, or that terrible reminiscence of evil inflicted, which seeks or feels no relief but from the power of redoubling the infliction on others. Among them were many whose faces were marked with a character of deep reflection and indomitable resolution : not one of them who was not, from hour to hour, prepared for the loss

of mortal life, and engaged as frequently in the most awful questions relating to future existence. Hovering thus, as it were, between the living and the dead, they seemed to look on their earthly tenure with scorn; and to the future they had familiarized themselves by the intense and solemn exercise of all their faculties and feelings on "those mysteries which Heaven will not have man to know." So "under the shade they walked; now solemn stood." These groups were scattered promiscuously wherever they might find space; but far above them there was an ample auditory. The Albigeois, to the number of thousands, crowded the hills that enclosed this valley: they sat in patient silence, catching from time to time the sequel of a prayer, or a denunciation, and echoing it in voices that, numerous and distant, added an awful solemnity to their close; and above *them* still were seen the tents of the army of the Count of Toulouse, hanging like flakes of snow on the tops of the hills; while low and dim in the valley burned the lights that

glimmered from the cavern, where the elders of the congregation had met to debate on the projected expedition to the city of Toulouse, and to bless or ban it, according to their various views and feelings, whose influence was permitted an operation which had hitherto produced but diversity, dissension, and hostility. Of this, Genevieve had not as yet been a witness; and the glorious sight which the first view of thousands of people worshipping amid rock and mountain, under the canopy of Heaven, and by the light of the rising stars, which glow like suns amid those mountain regions—the pealing answer of the thousand voices to a single prayer—the choral hymn that woke the echo of a mountain “seated in hearing of a hundred streams”—the glorious and innocent pomp of this primitive worship, in a temple of which earth formed the foundation, the eternal mountains the walls, and Heaven the roof,—struck on the high-toned mind of Genevieve, and she could not help exclaiming: “Such, such was Israel once, ere God descended to dwell in

temples made by hands—even when He was fitly worshipped in his primeval and heaven-domed shrine in the wilderness—when the sands of Arabia were pressed by the knees of six hundred thousand worshippers, and her rocks echoed nightly to the songs that made them vocal with the name of the Holy One of Israel. My God, leave to thy people the Heaven, which is thy throne, to appeal to ; and the earth, which is thy footstool, to kneel on ; and we will not envy the glories of the Temple, where thy presence descended in fire on the altar, and thy voice was heard between the trembling wings of the cherubim !”

As she spoke, Arnaud led her to the entrance of the cave, where the Barbes, with some of the military leaders, were engaged in prayer, interrupted by eager dispute about the movements of the host. Barbe and chief were fiercely at work : text and war-cry were levelled at each other, as when “ arrows clove arrows in the air, and darkened all the sky.”—“ Nay, let me rest here,” said Gene-

vieve, glancing a look into the cave, "of a truth I am wearied and sore-worn; and I feel somewhat like a presage of evil hanging at my heart, that I can neither define nor banish."—"Genevieve," said a voice low and close to her, "go no further—enter not the cave." The voice was Amand's; but so altered by some powerful emotion, that she was compelled to look stedfastly on the speaker before she could recognize the voice. "And wherefore not?" said Genevieve. He repeated the interdiction in a voice still more agitated, broken, and terrific; "Go no further—enter not," and unable to articulate the word "there," he pointed, with action alarming from its violence, to the cave. Genevieve rose in terror; and Amand, mistaking this movement for a resolve to enter, grasped her arm and repeated, "Go not, I command!—no, I implore thee, unless thou wouldst hear that which will transfix thee where thou standest:" and he rushed away; yet, before he was out of sight, turned again, and by an

attitude of deprecation the most vehement, seemed silently to beseech her not to go; he then disappeared.

"Is the youth insane, or is he distempered with strong wine?" said Arnaud, gazing after him. "Alas! no," said Genevieve; "an evil and unhappy spirit troubles him, and prompts him to utter he knows not what." The sounds of contention fierce and loud that had issued from the interior now suddenly ceased, and a deep voice was heard speaking alone, "Yet tarry, maiden," he continued, seeing she was about to advance, "peradventure there are things spoken within which may be heard only by the ears of the chief of the congregation, and in a council of war, or deep debate on mysteries, the presence of a maiden were unseemly and unnecessary: tarry a while that I may go in;" and he left her. Arnaud returned in a few moments, his countenance was very pale, and averted from her. He took her hand without seeming to know that he held it, and attempted hastily to draw her away.

"Wherefore is this?" said Genevieve, "surely I will enter, for what evil can befall me—if Pierre be there?" Arnaud beheld her for a moment with an aspect, in which doubt, regret, and pity were struggling, and then dropping her hand departed without speaking.

Genevieve, thus left alone, after a momentary pause, approached the interior of the cave. She did not enter, but stood leaning on a crag of the rock, which concealed her from the view of those within. They consisted of Mattathias, Boanerges, and some of the more fierce and zealous both of the pastors and chiefs;—Pierre was also there, seated on a block of stone, himself appearing turned to stone also; his clasped hands resting on the top of a staff, and his sightless eyes turned towards heaven. Mattathias and all the rest were standing: he was silent, but he appeared, from his peculiar and terrible expression both of face and attitude, to have been uttering some tremendous imprecation as he stood. The rest were gazing on him silent also; but

amid the horror that marked every pallid visage with a deeper shade, a stern satisfaction was visible. The barbes threw back their cowls, and the warriors leaned on their swords, all fixing their stern and eager looks on him.

Mattathias had been disclosing to them the crime of Genevieve, of which he had been informed through a channel that may be guessed at. He was now winding up the period of his denunciation against his victim, while she herself was involuntarily and invisibly the witness of her own condemnation.—From what she had heard, she understood what had been already said, and perhaps already determined; and as if she had been present and pleading among them, she gazed on every iron visage and cold fixed eye, but read no relenting in them: she clasped her hands and recoiled. The next moment Mattathias, though with a reluctant pause, announced death to be the punishment.—Death—death—repeated many voices. But

some of those voices echoed the word in horror.—some pronounced it in the mere agitation of the moment—some in doubt of what they heard, some in direct question, but not one in vengeance,—save that of Mattathias. The stern zealot repeated the sound.—“And she must die, then; she *must* die!—must she die?” repeated Pierre, dropping his staff, and rolling his lightless eyes round the assembly, as if trying to examine their countenances by the long-lost power of vision. “By the law,” said Mattathias, “such ought to die.”—“By what law?” asked the trembling parent; “by a law long abrogated—the law of the Jews. I appeal to Christians—I appeal to *men*—to fathers, and to mothers!—Speak, for I cannot see you—Oh, strike not the staff from the hand of the decrepid; quench not the sole light of the blind! Must my child die?”—“Yea, and thy hand should be first upon her,” cried Mattathias, “for malediction and for death;” and he seized the arm of the ancient man, whose exhausted frame fell senseless at his touch.

"Oh! not his—not his!" cried Genevieve, as she rushed into the cave, and prostrated herself beside the pastor——

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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THE ALBIGENSES.

CHAPTER I.

If but one poor straw ye burn,
Or do our towers so much molest
To scare a swallow from his nest,
St. Mary, but we'll light a brand,
Shall warm your hearths in Cumberland.

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

MEANWHILE the bishop had gained the upper gate of his castle, and the warders, starting from their seats of stone, hollowed in its walls, held torches while the port-cullis was raised; and many attendants, ecclesiastical and military, crowded the arched way behind, their torches flinging an umbered light on its narrow entrance of grey stone and its ribbed arches. In the front, and in strong contrast to the smoky glare of the torches, and the dark masses on which it fell, stood the bishop of Toulouse, magnificently arrayed as just risen from a banquet; his crosier-bearer on one side, and on the other his standard-bearer, displaying the broad banner, embroidered with the motto of the crusaders in wrought gold, *Dieu et l'Eglise*. The bishop's castle was fortified with unusual strength; from the gate which opened on the drawbridge, a flight of stone steps, cut in the solid rock, led to a second and higher gate, which opened on the court-yard, whose level was far above that of the moat; each of these gates was defended by a strong portcullis, and the first by a strong barbican and barriers beside. A band of knights appeared at the same moment, riding close to the barbican, having a stout train of men-at-arms

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in their rear, and seeming to demand parley. "Who and what are ye?" said the bishop. "Knights as ye seem by your guise, though not by your courtesy, who ride in hostile wise so near the holy and peaceful habitation of a churchman." At these words a herald was about to apply his bannered trumpet to his mouth, when the foremost knight struck down his arm, and, pricking forward, reined up his steed in the van; and, rising in his stirrups, shook his mailed hand at the bishop for a moment, without speaking; then extended it right onward, as if menacing the castle. "Speak," said the bishop, "if any in yon train can speak; I answer no dumb defiance.—Say who ye are, and wherefore come ye?"—"False priest! disloyal prelate!" said the knight, whom rage alone had bereft of speech. "Full well thou knowest who we are, and wherefore we are come. Thou holdest a prisoner within thy godless walls, for whom the royaume of King Philip were but meet ransom. Thou wottest whom we mean. Deliver her suddenly and ransomless, or thy proudest turret shall kiss foundation-stone ere the morn;—darest thou deny that such is here?"—"And admit she be," said the prelate, "she hath sought shelter here, and here shall she abide till the royal mandate of King Philip claim her, not the light summons of nameless wanderers."—"Thou liest in the throat, priest!" said another knight, "but we will not parley in words with thee; we will suddenly return in stronger force, and see if thy towers then hold not softer parley with our catapults and arbalists."—"Advance a war-wolf against these towers," said the bishop, in the perfect calmness of resolved crime, "and that very hour the deepest moat of my castle shall be measured, by a weight that shall never be raised till the day of judgment."—"Thou dardest not such outrage," said the knights, "in the face of Europe, of Christentye, of chivalry—thou dardest not. We defy thee."—"Defy not me, ye triflers—*boys who ride forth with a lady's favour for your*

casque, and a sonnet for your cuirass ! What I dare to say, I dare act, and avouch with sword and lance," said the warlike prelate. " And I say to thee, Bernard de Vaugelas, and to thee, Pierre de Limosin, for I know ye both, as well by your cognizances as by your saucy bearing, that I lack not royal warrant for word and deed. Ye shall have the proof anon ! On the distant hills I see a royal courier, and he beareth him right onward to this castle."—" Thou shalt never be the wiser of his counsels," said the knights: " we will slay that false courier with our lances ere he arrive ; right well we know the errand he rides on."—" Recreant and disloyal knights," said the prelate, " no marvel that ye thus insult the church in the person of her highest dignitary, when ye dare defiance to the missives of your liege lord the king : but look to the end !"—" Lawless kings and godless priests merit such meed," cried the knights, as they wheeled round in fierce career to intercept the courier. At the bishop's order signals were hoisted from the warder's tower to instruct the courier the path he was to pursue. The messenger, after checking his course for a moment, appeared to understand and obey the signals, and turned in another direction. Meanwhile the knights pricked up the hill, and soon reined their steeds on its summit, cresting it, as they stood, like a battlement of iron ; while their men-at-arms, though sorely galled by the archers' shot that flew fast and heavy from the bishop's towers, gathered close to the drawbridge, so as to cut off the possibility of the messenger's arrival. The unfortunate courier saw his mortal peril, ride where he might ; but he was not unprovided for the emergency : he attached his letters to an arrow, and, drawing the bow with his utmost strength, he shot towards the castle with good aim, and the arrow fell near the bishop's feet, at the same moment that the hapless bearer expired under the lances of the knights. The bishop in triumph held up the letters during this dreadful scene,

and immediately quitting his situation, the portcullis was lowered. The knights, after venting their rage in as many curses as must have made ample matter for their next confession, withdrew with their train into an adjacent wood, not caring to abide in the town, lest their commerce with some of the bishop's domestics, touching their secret admission into the castle, should be suspected.

Meanwhile Genevieve, left so unexpectedly alone and unobserved, had lost no time in profiting by the opportunity. She had noticed with quick observation, that the compartments of that splendid chamber were filled with curtains in strict conformity to its oriental costume; and she conceived that, through one of these, she might have easier and less discoverable access to the other apartments of the castle, than through doors hollowed in walls of stone.

Soon after the departure of the bishop, she raised one of the curtains, and found herself in a long vaulted passage, lit at the extremity by the flame that arose from an iron cresset. She advanced with trembling steps towards the light. It burned before an arched door, that closed the extremity of the passage. She paused in deep disappointment, when the sobs of an agonized spirit were heard issuing from the apartment; and, instantly forgetting her own dangers and terrors, she ventured to raise the latch of the door, and to enter. It opened on another magnificent chamber, but inferior to that she had just quitted. It seemed as if one were painted by the burning fingers of luxury and passion, for the welcome of their favourites: the other, as if arrayed by the gorgeous but cold hand of ceremony for the reception of its guests. All was chaste and splendid; a fretted lamp of silver shed its light on silken tapestry, wrought with the exploits of the Spanish knights against the Saracens; and at the upper end of the chamber lay a lady under a silken canopy, her veil cast over her head, and apparently lost in grief. So light was the tread, so soft the approach of Genevieve, that she

stood before the lady for some moments unseen as unheard, till the latter, flinging off her veil, gazed round her suddenly. The form of the beautiful Genevieve, gorgeously arrayed, gleamed before her like a vision. At the first view the lady uttered a faint shriek; then recognizing her, she instantly assumed the conscious dignity of "high habitual state;" for, without bowing her head, or extending her arm, "I know thee now," she said; "thou art she with whom I journeyed here, and to whom I intrusted a gem of price to win thy secrecy if thou knewest me, or thy aid if thou knewest me not: but I see," she said, casting a haughty glance on Genevieve's glittering habit, and then on her own tunic of dark blue velvet, sprinkled in silver with the lilies of France—"I see how it hath fared with thee: thy gay habit proclaims thee already the victim and the scoff of thy brutal enthraller. Why comest thou here to insult that misery, perchance, thy fatal beauty hath caused?"—"Lady," said Genevieve, offering her again the gem, "as pure as this gem sparkles, so pure is the hand that offers it to thine. Dare I else stand before thee? Dare I claim the sanctity of my sex, or feel that which I do this moment—that in thy presence I am safe, were I what thou deemest me?"—"Thou art wise as well as fair, damsel," said the lady, half rising from her couch: "to what lofty descent am I to ascribe speech so gentle, and thoughts so noble?"—"Alas!" said Genevieve, "humble birth and most unhappy lot were but worthless commendations to thy favour—I must win it by better deservings: by happy chance I have discovered the means of reaching this apartment unobserved; aid me to pursue those means, and if, as I deem, thou art with me a reluctant inmate here, we may yet devise for our liberation."—"May the saints aid thee in the purpose they have inspired!" said the lady fervently; "and now I bethink me, chance hath also favoured me. My chief attendant was

one of the deluded heretics men call the Albigenses: she was borne prisoner here, and became (by means I cannot tell) the loose companion of the godless bishop;—from thence she sunk into a menial, and now half her wretched existence is passed in carousal and vile degradation—half in weeping her former state: yet such fast-clinging hold hath she of her early errors, that when I bow to the cross, she ever quits my chamber, though it be all the while to hold loose talk with the pages in the antichamber. Such, alas! is the tenacity with which we cling to creeds, and the ease with which we resign principles!”—Genevieve sighed and shuddered at this portrait, as she reflected that the unhappy original had once professed the same pure faith, and, perhaps, possessed the same unsullied conscience, as her own. —“This will give us unobserved occasions of meeting,” continued the lady: “but art thou not anxious, maiden,” she said, “to know to whom thou hast proffered thy services?”—“Alas! noble lady,” said Genevieve, “is it not enough that it is a woman, and oppressed? Trust me, no image touches mine heart more pitifully, save”—she said, while her eyes filled fast with tears, “save it were, perchance, that of a very aged man, deserted, solitary, and blind.”—“I know not what thou meanest, damsel,” said the lady, who appeared to be occupied by her own sufferings exclusively, and even in suffering to feel that superiority of rank which she dared not avow, and yet wished to be instinctively understood. “Perchance thy zeal will not slack,” she said more proudly, “at the recognition of its object. I am Ingelberg, the queen, and wife of Philip Augustus.”—Genevieve instantly sunk to the floor, and kissed the hem of her sovereign’s garment: “and how,” she said, raising her eyes, “how did I, a peasant damsel, dare to murmur at my fate, when the royal lady of the land is held enthralled by her false vassals? Madame,” she continued, “where is the faith and power of thy royal spouse—of thy children—of thy

nobles? why is a helpless maiden the sole attendant on the wife of King Philip, and the sovereign of France? Oh God! forgive me, that till now I thought suffering the sworn-brother of humble birth alone!"

"Amen to thy prayer!" said the queen, smiling through her tears; "for surely the thought favoured much of ignorance. From that sad and splendid hour, when I sat by the side of Philip, the crowned queen of France, till this, never did I place my head on a pillow in peace, or raise it in hope. King Philip loved all womankind but me, and I bore his early wanderings without a murmur; but as my children grew up,"* (her voice was choked,) "my loving and loyal son, Prince Lewis, was urged by my wrongs to brave his father, dagger in hand, while yet a boy. Oh, what a sight for a mother and a queen to witness! But now King Philip, neglecting the crusades against Saracen or heretic, is given wholly to the love of the fair Agnes of Moravia: she hath borne him children; and for her sake was I to have been poisoned, that she might have reigned queen of France. Wherefore, holding my life to be merely perilled, unless I put the broad seas between my lord the King and me, it was my purpose to escape to the King of Denmark, my brother, and there enshroud me in the habit of a nun; for, trust me, maiden," gracefully placing her hand on the bright locks of Genevieve, "if peace ever settles on a brow that was once as fair as thine, it will be when wrapt in a veil, not when bound by the diadem of France!"

"But, my liege lady," said Genevieve, "were there not nobles and knights to assert the rights of the queen? Are they not now thundering at the gates of this palace of crime and tyranny?"

"And who are they?" said the queen, in a melan-

* This is a departure from history. Ingelberg had no children; and Lewis was the son of Philip by his first wife, Elizabeth of Hainault, whom Mezeray sometimes calls Isambeau.

choly accent?—"Even knights and troubadours. Alas! maiden, that I must initiate thee into the crimes and voluptuousness of these times! These men, who pride themselves on composing some disjointed sonnets as harsh as the hymns of the Albigenes, ever select some beauty or noble dame for the subject;—some of them have even dared to make *me* the subject of their songs: and it is to this I owe that they are now wasting their threats against these impregnable towers. They deem a mistress as indispensable to a troubadour, as a saint to a religionist. And if I owe my deliverance to them, it will be to a spirit of romantic and licentious gallantry, not to the devoir which true knights should pay, by their vow, to a persecuted female, and a deserted queen."—"Now go," said Ingelberg, "ere thine attendant surprise thee; and remember me, maiden, in thine orisons."

Genevieve again kissed the hem of her sovereign's robe, and regained her own chamber without observation.

CHAPTER II.

Sleep you, or wake you, lady bright?
Now is the fittest time for flight.

Castle Spectre.

THE next morning, Genevieve had scarce time to collect her thoughts on the important event of the preceding night, when the passage leading to her chamber rang with the tread of armed feet; and the bishop, harnessed all but his head, stood before her, a page bearing his lance and helmet.

"Damsel," he said, "a hasty summons calls me hence. I speed to aid the abbot of St. Etienne, to siege and spoil the castle of the Lord of Ventadour, who hath borne away the abbot's leman, and denies to hold her to ransom. Such aid may I demand from the abbot at mine own need; and harness was never buckled on bolder breast, nor lance set in rest by more warlike hand, than those of that mettled churchman. Pity and shame it is that he sporteth away life amid lemans and ladies, instead of rallying in the van of the Crusaders! Were not a woman the cause, never would he have lifted spear against the Lord of Ventadour, though he had burned the abbey over his head. A peaceful churchman, and an orderly!"

"What churchmen!" thought Genevieve, as she stood silently before him, offering mute and internal thanksgiving for his absence on any terms, as feeling herself free from persecution and peril worse than death for that period at least. She was about to add, "I thought your intendment was against the heretics;" but she checked herself, conceiving that she might learn more from the bishop's communications than from her own inquiries.

"Nay, seat thee, damsel," said the prelate: "why should trembling beauty stand servilely before one who hath ever been beauty's vowed slave? Can aught be done to pleasure thee in my absence? Speak and command me."

"If my lord would listen to the prayer of his handmaid," said Genevieve, "let me be permitted to walk more frequently in the gardens of the castle." The bishop's brow contracted. "Oh!" said Genevieve, clasping her hands, "let not my lord be angry, —I dream not of liberty or of hope. But let me breathe the pure air of heaven, see the distant mountains above the walls of my garden-prison; see the work of God's hands, not of man's, once more, and weep in freedom,—grant me but this. Alas! here,"

she continued, "the rich and heavy odours of these perfumed chambers are like the steams of intoxication, magic, and sin."—"Order shall be taken for it," said the bishop, softened by her supplicating earnestness. "But well didst thou term thine hope of escape from hence a dream; for in mine absence will rule a sterner master of this wild household than I have been, an austere priest now, though once a preacher of thy heretic creed."—Genevieve, accustomed to vicissitudes, heard him without betraying any emotion. "Wouldst thou know who is the master of my household in mine absence? It is thy former associate, even the deacon, Mephibosheth: was not such his Jewish name?"—Genevieve, who feared that her answer might provoke him, was silent, till reading in his eye that her silence displeased, she uttered what she felt in three short words,— "Is it possible?"—"Possible!" retorted the prelate, "all things are possible to him who grasps with one hand the sword of earthly power, and holds in the other that visionary key that unlocks the portals of the world to come. Maiden, be wise! obey the lesson that the wise deacon hath set thee; and, look thou be in more tractable mood on my return."—"And by what means," said Genevieve timidly, "hath such sudden conversion been wrought?"—"By means proportioned to their end!" said the bishop. "Give me man, not brute matter to deal with, and I will baffle the boast of that antique dreamer, who said, 'Give me where I may stand, and I will move the world.' There be weights some may not raise with levers, and others can balance with a straw. Slight engineers were we, unless we knew what load was to be drawn with wain-ropes, and what with a thread! They had fasted and penanced the worthy deacon in the abbey of Normoutier, till he was a mere skeleton. I wrought by other means: I caused the deacon not to fast, but to dine with me. The controversy was hot, and so

were the viands ; the strife rose high, but higher mantled the goblets ; and the man who would have contended at the stake for his faith, resigned it for a mess of pottage, swallowed councils and confections in the same mouthful, and digested the celibacy of priests by the help of an eringo pie. What ! shall I lose a convert for lack of saffron* in his condiment, or hurl fathers, fire, and faggot at one who is best convinced by marchpane and malvoisie ?"—“ And canst thou rely on the sincerity of such converts ?” said Genevieve.—“ For their sincerity, I reck not of it !” said the prelate ; “ but on their thenceforth close-linked fealty to me do I most surely reckon. Their crime hath placed a gulph between them and mankind ; their former fellows dread and hate, their new associates doubt and despise them. In such a state they can become important only by crime ; therefore by that they distinguish themselves, and are flagitious by the fixed necessity of their situation. The habit of doubting, too, ends for the most part in infidelity : then are they meet for any task that power and guilt may enjoin them. Oh ! for a ruthless despicable deed, appoint me ever your cold-hearted infidel, not your burning bigot : the latter may exalt crimes into virtues, but the former holds virtues very crimes ; he loathes those habits he cannot participate in, those hopes he cannot aspire to, the forfeited blessings of the birthright he has sold : and therefore will he labour to prove, that they who trust in them are fools ; that their virtue is hypocrisy, their religion a name, and their hope a lie.”—Alas ! thought Genevieve sadly, that such high gifts of physical power and mental might should be bestowed on one like thee, who wielded them only against the power that gave them !

* Saffron was then deemed so exquisite a delicacy, that a satire still extant upbraids the ladies for abridging its use in their kitchens, to employ it in cosmetics.

"What thinkest thou of my convertite?" said the bishop, with haughty irony.—"May Heaven have mercy on him!" said the maiden.—"If thou disbelievest what I tell thee," said the bishop, "wilt thou believe thy senses?" And he stamped with his armed foot, and at the sound the quondam deacon, Mephibosheth, in full clerical habit, advanced between two priests of the bishop's household, all three chaunting with as much vigour and vociferation as St. Augustin of yore, when he approached the Saxon king, with the cross in the van, and the priests in the rear singing litanies.

"Suffer me," said the bishop, "suffer me, fair lady, to present to thee our chaplain and secretary—even Sir Ambrose, a reverend priest of the grave and godly household of the bishop of Toulouse. Come on, Sir priest; speak for thy function. Expound to this fair heretic the texts that concern this matter of thy conversion."

At the word, Sir Ambrose advanced, and forthwith commenced a predication, so long and loud, urging with such inverted tenacity all the most popular topics of a Catholic controversialist, and breathing so hotly the spirit of proselytism to his new creed, that Genevieve, after raising her appealing eyes to the bishop and preacher, at length, saddened and sickened at heart by this horrid prostitution, burst into an involuntary flood of tears. The bishop, though he despised tears, could not behold those of beauty unmoved, and he dismissed the deacon.

"See now," he said, "by what threads weights may be drawn. That man would have bit out his tongue and spit at me at the stake, yet hath he melted before the fires lit in my kitchen. I hold your true infallibility lies not in a conclave, but in a council of your sapient and savoury cooks, and Sir Ambrose deems the doctrine orthodox."—"I ever held him a slave to sensual appetite, and a boaster," answered Genevieve.—"And for those who are slaves to *mental* appetite," said the bishop, "it is as easy to find

fetters—or snares :—ambition—pride—even rapacity—they be glorious guilts that boast themselves—faults that men share with the mightiest of earth's lords ; perchance, if all that is written in thy forbidden volume be true, with the highest order of angelic beings : but sensuality, the low and loathsome working of a carnal spirit, proves it not *my* power to discover such an agent, and to make him work my will ?”—“ There be those who, I yet think, would resist all that thou couldst offer—and thy power is mighty ; all thou couldst menace—and thy wrath is deadly,” said the maiden.—“ Name them,” quoth the bishop, glancing over his tablets. “ I have names here written down. Mattathias, a brutal warrior ; Boanerges, a powerful preacher. The saints speed me through this catalogue of names, assumed from their Jewish theology !—Why, maiden, I tell thee,” he said, laughing at the list, “ as lightly as I won the deacon Mephibosheth to become my chaplain—it is but after a few hours of torture or of luxury, as we have to deal with strong or with relaxed habits, to put a lance into the hands of the mighty, or a text into the mouths of the eloquent, and thy Mattathias and Boanerges shall severally volley their arrows or their curses against what side I choose to point. The one I could win by the glory of riding a knight in the crusading army—the other by the hope of out-thundering all its trumpets in proclaiming the miracle of his conversion.”—“ It may be so,” said Genevieve, trembling at her own temerity, “ it may be so : but there are yet two names unwritten in thy book of seduction and death.”—“ And which be they ?” said the bishop.—“ Those,” said Genevieve, “ of a blind, poor, and aged man, who would spurn at the proffer of all visible creation, being as one who sees the *Invisible*, and prizes that vision alone ; and of a despised and enthralled maiden, who sets all claim of glorious ancestry below the boast of inheriting his faith, his fortitude—and, if Heaven so wills, his sufferings.”—The bishop's trumpets sounded to horse as she spoke, and

he started on his feet at the summons, snatching his helmet and lance from his page. He paused a moment, and flung back one wild and flashing glance on Genevieve. "Maiden," he said, "by heaven I leave thee with reluctance, though that trumpet sounds me to the fearful game, which I love as laggards love their chess and draughts. Thy voice would wake a warrior's soul within him more deeply than all the trumpets of a royal host, were they thundering around the oriflamme of France. But every word thou speakest rivets the chains of thy destiny more fixedly. Thou must be ours," he said, with reverted glance. "Thou must be *mine*," as he flung his helmet on his head; and, the streaming plumes floating far backward at the motion, he strode from the chamber, leaving Genevieve relieved by his absence, but dreading that after that absence worse was to be feared from his return.

For three following days her existence was as wretched as prescriptive and monotonous existence always must be. In the afternoon she was permitted, and even enjoined, to walk in the garden; for the bishop was as jealous of the beauty of a selected favourite, as a florist would be of the stripes of a tulip, or the tint of a hyacinth. But never did she quit her chamber, or take her guarded walk, save watched by two sentinels, who crossed her path at every step: her only hours of indulgence were those passed with the imprisoned queen, whose apartment she gained every night by means of the passage through the oriental chamber, without detection or even suspicion. They sat together—wept while they talked of hope, and hoped more fervidly while they wept:—then parted with mutual assurances of happier prospects on the morrow; and met with the melancholy smile that announced the augury vain: and, while the last day's disappointment wrung their hearts, prepared for the renewal of the pang by talking of the hope that to-morrow would bring forth."

It was on the fourth evening that Genevieve, raising with slow and timid touch the latch of the royal apartment, beheld queen Ingelberg standing right opposite to it, her form irradiated, and buoyant with hope and joy. "Tidings," she cried, ere Genevieve could well enter the apartment, "tidings of hope! Bernard de Vaugelas and Pierre de Limosin are riding near the walls of the castle. I have strained mine eyes from the casement the live-long day, to watch them as they rode. I saw them careering at the head of a troop of men-at-arms; and so aptly did they counterfeit in their action the surprisal of a castle by a secret passage, and the deliverance of an imprisoned lady, that while I beheld them I deemed myself at liberty again: and, for my better assurance, the streamers of their lances were all of green, the cherished colour of hope; the very same their scarves were of in the lists of the castle of Plessy, when their sonnets were first sung, and their lances shivered, in honour of the fair queen of France. But why speak I of this to thee, who art ignorant of the gallantries of a court, as," she added with a sigh, "thou art innocent of its crimes?" Yet a reminiscence of former splendor and gaiety mingled obviously with the regret which Ingelberg seemed to bestow on the errors and the perils of courtly existence. "Now aid me, damsel," said the queen, with renewed spirits, "to place this lamp in the casement; for well as I might judge by their signals, they required me to leave the casement ope, and place a lamp withal, in token that I understood and approved their purpose."

Genevieve obeyed; and then seated herself at the casement, trembling with hope, solicitude, and doubt. The queen never ceased to utter vivacious and rapturous exclamations. Genevieve was deeply silent. The one, whose habits had been (with some interruptions) those of command and pleasure, felt that she breathed once more in the lofty elements of her native atmosphere: to the other, joy was so rare a

visitor, that when it came it was slowly recognized and timidly welcomed.

The night was calm, the lamp burned with a steady light, and the stillness of high expectancy in that lonely apartment was singularly contrasted with the sounds of revelry that rose from the hall below, where the loose household of the bishop were feasting.

They had not long sat thus, when the queen asked her, did she not hear a sound approaching? "Of a surety do I, royal lady," said Genevieve; her senses bearing joyful testimony to the hopes of Ingelberg: each interpreted the augury according to their different associations.

"It is like the floating of a knight's bannerol," said the queen.—"Methinks," said Genevieve, "it is like the fluttering flight of a wearied bird:" and as she spoke, a pigeon flew through the open casement: then, scared by the light of the lamp, it fluttered round the chamber, and at last rested on the bosom of Genevieve; while the queen, who understood this mode of communication better than her companion, soon detached an epistle, elaborately tied and curiously perfumed, from the wing of the wearied bird: its superscription was—"To her who, in yielding the title of Queen of France, hath won that of Queen of all loyal hearts and stout lances:" and the first lines of the epistle corresponded with such induction, for they began—"Let all loyal lovers utter vows to their Lady Venus and the blessed Saint Martin, whose eve devout Christians are now about to celebrate, and they shall find their prayers answered."

"Alas!" said the anxious Ingelberg, "how mockful in our hour of wretchedness is that jargon of profane gallantry to the ear of a prisoner listening for the hope of her disenthralment; it is worse than the language of France sounded in mine ear when I first heard it: and mine eyes so ache, and mine hands so tremble!" she cried in tears, letting the letter fall; "and I have no one to read to me the purpose

couched in the fine fooleries of their poetical and courtlike affectedness."

"If it please the queen's grace, I skill to read," said Genevieve timidly.—"Thou!" said the queen in amaze: "then thou hast deceived me, and surely art of noble birth, or else" (she added, pausing and recoiling)—"a heretic!"—"Does it avail," said Genevieve humbly, "what she may be, who, in the hour of extremity, can render true service to her sovereign?"—"Read on, then," said the queen, "sith it must be; but overpass those flourishings and gaudy illuminations of the scroll, and come plainly to the text."—"The purport is," said Genevieve, with difficulty disentangling the meaning from the intricate meshes of amorous phraseology in which it was involved, "that thy deliverers are this night conferring with one who hath promised them secret entrance into the castle; that they hold his promise stronger than his power; they dare not communicate more, lest messenger and message both be intercepted; but they will thee, royal lady, if thou receivest this letter, to return and superscribe it—'courage to loyalty, and hope to beauty.' Such is the letter," said Genevieve, blushing as she perused it. "And how, oh! how," said Ingelberg, impatiently wringing her hands, "can I return answer to them, being bereft of the writing materials I bore about me till I was conveyed hither?"—"Madame," said Genevieve, fertile in resources, "despond not yet. I bear a bodkin in mine hair that can make deep impression, and, from those four wax torches that burn so fair in the corners of your chamber, may we not glean enough to cover the paper withal, and trace on them the lines thy deliverers seek?"—"Do as thou wilt," said the queen, "for I give myself to thee solely, whatever thou mayest be. I am so lost betwixt fear and joy, that I could not now dictate, or write a line." Genevieve expeditiously and dexterously prepared the paper, traced the required characters on it, and then, with the queen's

assistance, fastening it by a silken thread, dismissed the bird of good augury on its flight. They then placed themselves once more close to the casement to await his return, each employed, though in different ways, in soliciting that aid, without which this desperate enterprise seemed impracticable; Genevieve, in silent internal prayer, and the queen in making a vow of a pix and chalice of pure gold to the church of Saint Olave, the patron of Denmark; but this situation, at once agitating and sedentary, soon became intolerable to both, and, with all allowance for the miscalculation of the progress of time, (unavoidable under such circumstances,) the delay of the bird's return, now protracted for hours, began to justify the terrors that seized them. Genevieve subdued the consciousness of her's in attempts to soothe the queen; but Ingelberg gave way to her fears, her repinings, and her impatience, with the vehemence of one long accustomed to consider even time her vassal, and to believe that mortal powers and agents, when employed in her service, should suddenly be invested with the might of supernatural ones. "Ah!" said she sadly, "why did I trust a deceitful troubadour?" and her memory suggested to her an ancient song, in which a disappointed retainer of one of them complains of their fickleness, arrogance, and levity; "they will promise any thing, but it is vanity, not truth, that prompts their boastings, and they would rather make themes for their own vaunting and perishable verses, than be recorded in the true histories of renowned knights. They will promise to ladies their liberty, to their brothers in arms the aid of lance and sword, to minstrels liberality, and to the saints jewels and robes of price; but their promises are false as vows made in wine, or love professed by a noble for a plebeian maiden:—who boasts and deceives like a false troubadour?" "Surely, royal lady," said Genevieve, "the knights will redeem their pledge; and even now something interposes between mine eyes and that star on which they

have been fixed so long." "It is a passing cloud," said the queen.—"But I hear the fluttering of wings."—"It is the sighing of the breeze," answered Ingelberg; but as she spoke the faithful messenger once more arrived, and the letter he bore contained intelligence beyond the imaginings of hope—their deliverance was to be unfailingly accomplished on the following night by means which the writer had not time to explain, but which precluded the possibility of disappointment or of discovery; and they had prudently delayed this communication, till, by the extinguished lights, they judged that all the inmates of the castle were retired to rest. "Did I not tell thee so?" cried the queen, offering her hand to the humble kiss of Genevieve, her despondency all forgotten,—“did I not say it from the first?—Why wouldst thou disquiet me with thy fears? Ah!” she cried, in the spirit of the age, “ah! who is it that loves and fights like the valiant troubadour?”

CHAPTER III.

The owls on the battlements cry,
Hollow winds they do murmur around,
Saying, Mary, prepare you to die—
My blood it runs cold at the sound.

Queen Mary's Lamentations.

FROM a troubled and melancholy dream, Genevieve awoke at dawn, with a confused consciousness of something important to be done or expected soon; even when her recollection returned, she felt like one stunned by the magnitude and indefinite extent of some vast and suddenly disclosed prospect. She could scarce comprehend her situation,—a heretic—the thrall of a godless libertine—the queen of France herself a prisoner in the same towers—their deliver-

ers knights, and troubadours, men valiant, loyal, (in the amorous language of the day,) but licentious, and, perchance, presuming on the success of their enterprise. With joy inexpressible she greeted the moment allowed for her brief exercise in the garden of the castle; for she felt that the agitation of her mind had extended to her frame; and that rapid and restless motion of the latter would be something like a balance to the painful impulses of the trembling dweller within. In the garden she almost forgot her terrors; the day was unusually lovely; there was a tender and vernal blue in the sky, a fresh mildness in the air, and a lingering glow of autumnal flowers, that transported the imagination, almost to the bright auspicious season that follows winter. There was a pillared arcade which the bishop had caused to be constructed to the south of the garden. Here, as Genevieve sat musing, in apparent slumber, on her situation of peril, and her hope of liberty, her sentinels, who had hitherto walked at a surly distance from her, now chanced to pass nearer; and she heard one of them say, "She sleeps, thou need'st not whisper;—I tell thee it must be done to-night."—"What must be done?" said his companion, "for hitherto thou hast spoken thy purpose darkly."—"The queen must be removed this night," said the other. "Here have been missives from the bishop, who, amid the thunders of the siege, found leisure to receive and answer the letters of King Philip, touching the matter of the queen's thralldom, and to send the order thou wottest of, and which must be suddenly obeyed."—"What cause hath the bishop to bear the queen such deadly hatred?" asked the other. "Tush, thou art a fool," said Hugues, "and knowest naught of state-policies; 'tis not the bishop's hatred, but King Philip's love, she must rue. So madly doteth he on the fair Agnes of Moravia, that he would bestow the choicest gem in his royal crown to make away queen Ingelberg. By lucky chance, in her flight she was captived by our far-reaching lord, who

hath made her sudden and sure removal the condition of obtaining men and treasures for the crusade. And such is the king's dotage, that he hath yielded to all that hath been required of him, and would have done so were King John of England thundering at the gates of Paris."—"The queen then dies to-night?" said the companion, with something like a reluctance of natural horror as he spoke. Genevieve's blood froze as she awaited the answer, yet still she preserved the appearance of sleep. "Deemest thou the bishop an unpolicied ass like thyself?" said Hugues, "no! he will have her conveyed in the deep sleep, into which the drug he hath sent me shall cast her, to that vault beneath her chamber, which many have been known to enter but none to return from. Yet his purpose aims not at her life: that will he preserve with jealous care, that, should King Philip deny him future aid, he may in a moment annul his adulterous marriage, by producing Queen Ingelberg alive."—"But being wholly in his power," said the other, "what needs there that sleepy drug thou minglest in her cup to-night?"—"To hinder cries heard, or resistance made," answered Hugues. "Fools would hold question till the day of doom! hear thou thy task; the rather keep the household from wandering near her chamber; say such is the bishop's command: look that the door to the vaulted passage be open, that she may be borne thither without noise or delay, and at midnight expect me bearing a royal burthen in my arms, and winning a royal guerdon by the deed."—"It is vengeance cold," said the other, who seemed but indifferently affected to the undertaking:—it is vengeance cold! Would the lady would awake!"—Genevieve, amid all her horror, had self-possession enough not to "awake" too soon; and when she at length appeared to do so, it demanded her utmost efforts to conceal the discovery she had made, and the feelings with which it had inspired her. Though her eyes were averted, she dreaded that her totter-

ing step and involuntary shudder would betray her horror of the assassins. At length she gained her apartment, and sat down in solitude and despair.

The dreadful fate of the unfortunate queen on the very eve of liberation, and with that fate her own involved—every way the prospect was horrible and hopeless; her mind succumbed beneath it, and she sat for a time in fearful stupefaction. But, long accustomed to demands for instant mental exertion, and never relaxed by the habit of indulgence even in grief, she struggled to rally her scattered and distracted faculties. Her first thought was for the safety of the queen; but how was it possible to gain her apartment till after the hour of supper? and at that hour the deadly drug was to be drunk, and she must see her no more.

One sole means suggested itself of obtaining an interview previous to the fatal hour of supper, and, feeble and almost hopeless as it was, she lost not a moment in attempting to employ it. She had observed that Hugues, who sometimes brought her meals, lingered secretly to hear the solitary hymn which she sung at their conclusion.

She had often discovered, that, while at her devotions, which always commenced and concluded with a hymn, he was gently pacing the adjacent gallery—and, as a stronger mark of his sensibility of music, he had even presented her with a small lute, obviously with a view to his own increased indulgence, though he said it was to soothe *her* solitude. To this resource, slender as it was, she now betook herself, and to propitiate him as far as her limited powers enabled her, she forbore to sing *hymns*, and tasked her memory for some antique Provençal ballads, which she had heard in her childhood. The spell wrought, he lingered and listened. Her voice, ever sweet and plaintive, now, under the influence of deep emotion, poured forth such rich and troubled tones that the wretch, with nerves of iron and heart of stone, after long reluctant struggle with a power

too mighty for him, at length cursed himself, yielded to it, and

He wept—he wept.” *Moore.*

In a few moments after he entered the chamber, and, while placing preparations for her solitary meal, said somewhat slightly in praise of her voice.—“ Alas !” said Genevieve, assaying her simple art, “ thou canst not judge of it. I am a bird that never could sing encaged, were every bar of it gold : and to thralldom now is added loneliness. Had I but a companion, I think I could make music that would be pleasant to thine ear.”—“ Thou shalt sup in the hall to-night,” said Hugues, after a pause, “ though I peril my place for it, so thou wilt sing sweet songs that I love, and be as the other damsels of the household.”—“ Oh, no, no,” said Genevieve, shrinking, “ it is not that I aim at—look,” she said, with an agonizing effort at playfulness, pointing to the cages with which her chamber was hung—“ look where many birds are gathered, they sing not : they chirp and wander ; but where two are paired,” pointing to a cage of doves, “ there they make sweet melody ;—list to them as thou lovest music, and by that sweet charm let me see the imprisoned lady to-night. Oh, never did mountain bird, sullen and drooping on her perch alone, warble forth more blithely when restored to a dear mate, than will I, if by thee I may win the sight of that sad lady. Say me not nay,” she cried, with vehement sincerity and unforced tears—“ to-night I must see her, for my mind is wondrous sad and heavy.”—“ To-night thou must if ever,” thought Hugues ; “ to-morrow she may change her gaoler for a ruder one, and her chamber for a long and lightless prison.”

Genevieve, who understood his horrid meaning but too well, sick at heart, replied not. Hugues stood pausing on her request : he knew his victim sure, and pondered how to purchase his indulgence at the cheapest price. “ If she should betray me,” said

Hugues, sullenly, compressing his under lip with his fingers. "Deemest thou me such a fool," said Genevieve, with increased fervour, "as to mar my last solace by mine own self-harming treachery?"—"Thou speakest wisely, damsel," said Hugues; "it were indeed thy self-harm; but," he exclaimed, turning suddenly, and fixing his dark and piercing eyes on her, "but whence is this marvellous importunacy, damsel, and so sudden too, that thou must visit that lady to-night?"—"Because," said Genevieve, "I have been haunted of late with fearful dreams: I have dreamed of the loss of a friend."—"Of what friend?" said Hugues, eyeing her more closely. "I have dreamed," said Genevieve, weeping unrestrainedly, "that evil was about to befall—" "Whom, damsel?"—"Mine aged father," said Genevieve; and her tears flowed faster, while her nice conscience checked her at the word. "Now for that word, damsel," said Hugues, clasping her small fingers in his coarse hand, "for that word thou hast won. I am a reckless wretch; but that is the priest's concern who will hear my last confession. I have a mother—a wrinkled crone, who weeps and rails and swears, and I leave not the bishop's service, I am but a lost man: yet still I trow she loves me well.—Dry thine eyes, maiden: thou shalt see this lady: expect me at the twilight."

The interval between his departure and return was, to Genevieve, "like a phantasma or a hideous dream." Reflection was impossible: the very resources of imagination failed; nor did even a vision of bright impossibilities, such as often visits us in our moments of darkest desperation, flash upon her mind. She sat almost unconscious, till the gathering shades of evening reminded her that the hour was come: the steps of Hugues were heard in the passage; the light he bore gleamed through the crevices of the door; it was opened, and he beckoned her with cautious gesture to follow him.

CHAPTER IV.

Yes, I am come to do mine office on thee ;
Thy life is wretched, and my stroke is sure.

MISS BAILLY.

ON reaching the apartment, Hugues lifted the tapestry that covered the door, and dropping it again instantly, Genevieve found herself alone with the queen. She stood there as she entered, unable to quit the spot, to raise her eyes, or to utter a sound. The chamber was nearly dark, nor did either at first seem to distinguish the other. " Oh ! " said Ingelberg, who appeared to start from broken sleep, " I have had such fearful visions. Wearied with thought, I tried to sleep ; Virgin Mother forefend that mine eyes should ever again close, if they must see forms so terrible ! I dreamed that I saw our friends riding all in the dim twilight, by the banks of a river, and that they ever motioned me to join them, still beckoning through the shade, and riding on. Oh, how I toiled to follow ; but heaps of armour, broken and bloody, lay all before and around me ; and still as I removed the massive pieces, heavier and heavier fell in my way ; at length, I won the brink of the river, but there was neither bridge nor ford, and I stood bewildered, and calling on them, when a little bark, rowed by an infant, set out from the opposite shore. I entered it, and, oh ! how powerless seemed the stroke of his oar in my dream, and how often the cross-set currents drove us back, ere we reached the centre of the stream. At length we gained it ; when his form grew bigger—his eyes were fixed on me—a fierce and fiendish laugh rung in mine ears—it was Hugues.—And then—but why standest thou so sadly dumb and motionless ? Speak, I pray thee, maiden ; amid the gloom

of the chamber thou lookest like some dim spectre.—Speak, I command thee, speak !” she cried, in the quick loud voice of fear. Genevieve, in brief and broken words, communicated her dreadful tidings, she scarce knew how ; and the queen with one piercing shriek dashed herself on the floor in utter despair. Genevieve sunk on her knees beside her, and, though hopeless, tried to speak of hope.—“ Hope !” exclaimed Ingelberg, in a voice that chilled her blood.—“ Hope !” she repeated, madly playing with the rushes with which the floor was strewn. Then, rising slowly, and her eyes vacantly but intently surveying every object in the chamber, till at length they rested on Genevieve,—“ Yes, I will hope,” she cried, falling on her neck, “ for there is something in thy presence, maiden, that forbids despair.”—“ And even now, is it not as by a miracle I am in thy presence, and with the permission of him who guards thee ?” pursued Genevieve, eagerly catching at a topic of comfort. “ Is not this a prosperous augury, and proof that a true earnest zeal contends with all possible things, yea, with those that seem impossible, and overcomes them ? May not something as wondrous interpose yet for thy deliverance ?—And even now a thought visits me, wild but most hopeful. Now do I turn prophetess in thy cause, queen, and presage most truly, that, if we may but reach the vault undiscovered —” —“ The vault !” exclaimed Ingelberg, recoiling with horror ; “ art thou mad, or wouldst thou drive me mad by such horrid mention ? Is not that the place whither they are to bear me ; the dungeon of mine eternal captivity ? Were I but once to enter its dark round, hope, reason, life, would all desert me together.” —“ Hear me, royal lady, hear thy poor vassal speak only this once,” cried Genevieve, zealously, “ and then resolve even as thou wilt. Is not that the very direction in which thy deliverers must come ?—and what if we meet them there ? Is it not also a place of safety and of concealment ? for who would search for thee there ? Trust me, oh queen,

in this thing," she continued, trembling with energy ; " yield to the strong impulse which rules me : for, since I have spoken, a light is on my mind, that, I do full truly feel, comes not from any earthly, or darker than earthly, power, but from that—" " Hush !" cried the queen, stopping her ears, " speak not thou of holy things—thou prayest not to holy saints."—" I pray to One mightier than they," said Genevieve, " even their Maker and mine—the Creator, not the creature."—" Hush !" interrupted the queen ; " for, however fairly thy words are ordered, it were deep sin to listen to them. Speak to me rather of this hope thou seemest to point to."—" We will not speak of it now ; it lies all shapeless and imperfect in my thoughts," said Genevieve, as the hope, at first so bright, rose in faded colours to her afterthought ; " but in its furtherance I pray thee, royal lady, to meet this Hugues to-night with smiles and cheerful favour ; give him all courteous entertainment, and seem to do him honour ; cause him that he sit at the board with thee, and that he drink much wine ; this will give me time to look stedfastly and definitely on that which is now dimly unfolding itself to the mind's eye. Nor must he," she added, " see thee thus with dishevelled hair, and robes all deranged. Will the queen permit so humble a handmaid ?" and, lighting the lamp that hung from the roof, she approached, while Ingelberg silently let down her long hair, whose profusion of pale gold locks covered the chair as she sat. As she proceeded in her task with trembling and silent dexterity, " It is not alone in sleep we dream," said Ingelberg ; " but now methought I was in my royal castle of Plessy ; and thou, the most favoured of my damsels, wast braiding my hair with pearls. Tell me, may not this be yet ? Thou wilt not answer ? Dost thou then envy thy queen the last smile that may ever visit her lip ?" and, as she spoke, though talking of smiles, she burst into an agony of tears.—" For Heaven's sake, madame, be more calm !" cried Genevieve : " alas, you will have much need of

oalm dissembled looks anon.”—“Doubt me not,” said the queen, recovering herself, with a faint effort at cheerfulness; “thou knowest I have right to a double share of dissimulation, as a woman and a courtier, and thou shalt see I will not forfeit my privilege.” As she spoke, steps were heard approaching; and the voice of Hugues sounded from an anti-chamber, where some pages were playing dice, and some women dancing loosely to the sound of the ghit-tern.—“Go hence,” he said; “the queen is ill at ease, and must not be disturbed; and look that ye approach not these chambers again all this night.” Ingelberg’s blood ran cold at the sound, whose meaning she knew too well. A few moments after Hugues entered with preparations for supper, dismissing the pages at the door. Full of the terrible event of the night, the unfortunate females observed the most trifling circumstances attendant on this preparation with anxious and watchful attention. Hugues, entering alone, placed two silver dishes on the board, and afterwards two goblets on a trivet adjacent, with a vase of water; the eyes of the females following him at every movement; the queen’s too intently, those of Genevieve cast down, shaded by her long dark eyelashes, but equally observant. When he had finished his preparation, he stood opposite to the queen in respectful silence, waiting for the signal to carve the meal. And now Genevieve was astonished at that conventional self-possession which is peculiar to the inmates of a court: amid all her agitation, imbecility, and terror, the queen addressed herself to Hugues with a mixture of condescension and dignity that enhanced each other; and none but a court-practised eye could discover, under the bland and beautiful smile that severed her lips, the anguish that stiffened her other features almost into convulsion.

“We thank our gentle gaoler,” said the queen, “for the solace he hath afforded us in the society of this maiden, and will do him meet requitement when in our royal palace, where we shall smile at our en-

thralment to this proud prelate here, as we would at a vision of captivity that had haunted us in our dreams. Meanwhile, receive such requitement as we can give ; sit at our board, and partake the meal with thy sovereign : and thou, maiden, sit too ; we will it.”—“ Alas ! madame,” said Genevieve, feebly supporting her part in the drama the wretched queen was forcing herself to act, “ alas ! madame, demean not your royal rank by such a guest.”—“ Sit ; we command thee,” said the queen, while Genevieve obeyed with undissembled awe of reluctance. Hugues glanced his dark eyes from the queen to her companion, as if he would read their souls ; then finally, with an expression resembling that of a beast of prey who is sure of his victim, and suffers it to sport out its space of misery without the possibility of avoiding its termination, he availed himself of the queen’s permission, seated himself at the table, and, having no invincible aversion to rich viands, exquisite wines, and the presence of beautiful women, he soon became the most joyous of the party. His own intense devotion during the meal rendered him fortunately regardless of the slender and tasteless homage of his companions ; and the wine, which the queen repeatedly urged him to drink, did not assist to quicken his powers of observation, farther than related to the unintermitting repletion of his ample goblet. Ingelberg, meanwhile, though apparently from time to time she touched her goblet with her lips, took care never to imbibe a drop of its contents. At the end of the meal, while Hugues was removing the dishes, (whose burthen had been lightened eminently by his exertions,) the queen exclaimed, “ Alas ! how different is this our gloomy meal in a prison, from those in our palaces and castles, where ladies danced, and troubadours sung, at the waving of queen Ingelberg’s hand.”—“ Madame,” said Hugues, whose spirits were not less exalted by wine than by the supposed condescension of the queen, (for, even in the temporary superiority given by crime or accident, vulgar minds

always feel their inferiority, and bow to the grace of the victim they prepare to sacrifice,) "Madame, it is a proverb in my country, that those who go forth to hear the song of the nightingale, return well pleased with the note of the thrush or the linnet; and if it please your grace, I will essay my simple skill." "It pleaseth us well," said the queen; and raising the untouched goblet to her lips, she said, "We drink to the strain of the thrush, since we may not hear that of the nightingale." There needed no more to excite Hugues, who, possessing a mellow though untutored voice, pantomimic humour, great self-confidence, and above all, the inebriation inspired by female beauty and applause, began with the "*Parrot*," by Arnaud de Carcasse, a whimsical licentious ballad, sufficiently popular then, and ending with repeating in a kind of recitative, and with much action, the *novel* of Peter Vidal; perhaps the most poetical and chivalric of all the productions of the troubadours. The queen, whose associations were easily excited, and whom neither terror nor peril could deafen against the voice of music and the force of dramatic action, applauded loudly; though sometimes, when her eye fell on the calm agony of Genevieve's expression, she sighed deeply, and, affecting to wipe the tears of laughter, felt they sprang from another source that almost froze them as they fell. Recovering herself, she cried, "Gramercy, fellow; thou hast pleased us well; and we would not willingly, during our short and enforced sojourn here, exchange thee for any other gaoler the walls of thy proud master hold."—"Royal dame," said Hugues, emboldened by wine, and the malignity of his conscious power bursting forth uncontrolled,—“royal dame, with all due humility, I do believe thou wilt have reason—(I say it without self-flattery)—to regret, when some sudden chance may cause thee to exchange thy present warder for another.” The queen, who comprehended the full meaning of these words, fell backwards in her chair. Genevieve saw and felt the

peril of the moment: "Trust me, madame," she cried, "thy warder loves music, however rudely touched or chanted: he hath lingered to hear my rude song, and would, if your grace so please, I might sing it again!"—Hugues, elated beyond himself, exclaimed, "An if the queen will crown her grace to me to-night, she will demand of that damsel a single song."—"Sing, then, damsel, we command thee," said the queen; whom a glance from Genevieve had taught to give the air of command to an act of necessity. "So please you," said Genevieve, trembling at the temerity of her experiment, "I have little skill to sing, but, if Hugues will fetch from my chamber the lute he hath lent me, I will essay mine utmost to please the royal ear." Hugues with delight accepted the commission, and departed instantly.

The queen and Genevieve were left alone. "We have a moment allowed us: examine the goblet, royal lady," cried Genevieve. The queen shook her head. "Thou knowest not," she said, "the deep and deadly potency of the draughts that they call soporific. I bear about me a charmed ring—a mighty test of what is sanative or mortal."—"Apply the test, apply it without delay," cried Genevieve. The queen drew a ring from her finger.—"If," she said, "in this goblet there be ingredients intended for mischievous or mortal purpose, the metal will change its hue, as I touch it with this gem." She applied the ring, and the metal of the goblet darkened all above the surface of the sparkling wine. The queen fell back in speechless horror, faintly uttering, "Twice have I thus saved my hunted life: but *now*—" "And now shall it again be saved!" cried Genevieve with zeal that made her tremble at her own word and act—"I will exchange the goblets. He is inflamed with much wine, and will not note the change: urge him by some playful challenge to drain the goblet on his return; and for the rest—"

The steps of Hugues were heard: he entered, and

delivered the instrument to Genevieve, with the flushed and triumphant air of one who was at once the master of his crimes and of his pleasures. "Thou hast marred it in the carrying," said Genevieve, pre-luding on it to catch his attention: "the strings are all discordant." The exchange of the goblets had been made in his absence, and the queen, seemingly jealous of his attention to the symphony, exclaimed,—"With all thy boast of loyalty to the liege lady of France, I will wage this turquoise ring to the glass button in thy cap, that thou wilt not quaff thy goblet at a draught to her sudden deliverance from thralldom!"—"Will your highness do me reason?" replied Hugues, with inflamed visage and broken articulation. "Oh! deeply, to such a pledge: doubt me not," said the queen, slowly raising the goblet to her lips.—"Then is thy turquoise but a lost turquoise, liege lady," cried Hugues; "for I told him a coys-trel and craven, who would not drink to a fair queen's pledge, till his brains turned like the vanes on an abbey tower, and rung like all its bells to boot!" and as he spoke, he seized his goblet and sunk on his knees, the queen bending on him looks fixed with horror for the event, while Genevieve, long accustomed to the suppression of emotion, testified here only by deathly paleness and suspended respiration. But Hugues was now beyond all thought of suspicion; he raised the goblet to his lips, and drained it at a draught.

The hollow sound from the cup marked the engulfing of the last drop: and he remained convulsed, without the power to replace the cup on the table, or to rise from his knees, though he made many efforts to do so, accompanied with a ghastly laugh of impotent self-derision. Failing finally, he remained before them a moment on his sinking knees; his flushed features making fearful contrast with the stony fixedness of his eyes; then, so potent and profound was the effect of the *mithridate*, compounded by the most skilful chemist of that age, that

he sunk back on his knees, his head reclining against the adjacent chair, still sensible, but wholly powerless.

The queen, alike overcome by scenes of terror, whether she was agent or spectatress, fell back in her chair, powerless as her persecutor; and Genevieve, after vain attempts to rouse her, felt that hers must be the dreadful task to take the keys from the living and struggling corse, who, though he expanded his arms, groaned deeply, and gazed on her with his glassy lifeless eyes, in full consciousness of her purpose, had not the power to prevent it. It was a task less terrible, but more difficult, to rouse the queen; and it was only by displaying the keys before her eyes, that Genevieve awoke her to a kind of stupified recollection: her lips opened, but not a feature in her face moved; yet she spoke with a kind of rigid dignity, half the result of paralysis, half of remembered associations. She struck the keys as they swung in Genevieve's hand. "I know thee who thou art," she said; "thou art my gaoler—thou comest to lead me to another dungeon—but I must follow thee." And, to the astonishment of Genevieve, with moveless features, and unmeaning but unerring steps, she rose and walked to the door of the apartment.

Genevieve in this last exigency availed herself of an illusion, which, though frightful to behold in its effects, she felt it necessary to encourage—the safety of the queen of France was in the hands of a female peasant. She caught up the lamp and keys, and passed quickly from the chamber, Ingelberg following her in a state of preternatural excitement. The precautions taken by Hugues for a different purpose, had removed all the attendants to a distance; even he who was to have assisted in conveying the queen to her prison, had not arrived, as the success of Genevieve's enterprise had anticipated the hour of his appointment.

They descended the stairs unmolested and unob-

served, and Genevieve then perceiving a low and open door, that seemed to lead to the subterranean passages of the castle, entered it with the feeling of one who has in her desperate course neither guide nor choice. She was right in her conjecture; it opened on an inclined plane, which they traversed for some time, till it led them to a flight of stone steps, of which their feeble light showed them neither the termination nor direction. Genevieve, after a brief pause, began to descend: the utmost caution was now necessary; the steps were broken and unequal, often interrupted by masses of stone, that seemed to have fallen from the arched roof above. The roof itself, framed of unhewn stone, was in many places so low, she could hardly crawl beneath it, drawing her companion with cautious gentleness along; and the torch, their only resource, struggling with the subterranean damp and vapours, threw out its flame far behind them, its sparks hissing on the dank footing as they descended.

On the shaken mind of the queen, the darkness, the solitude, and the slow progress, operated, however, favourably: she recovered her reason, and recognized her companion; but it was only to add to the distress of the burdened and helpless Genevieve. Believing herself at a sufficient distance to complain in safety, she poured out her feelings without complaint, and never spoke but to harass her assistant with enquiries she could not answer, lamentations she could not soothe, and terrors she dared not herself bear the steady view of. For the latter there appeared but too much reason: the descent seemed endless, for Genevieve knew not it penetrated even below the moat of the castle. It did end, however; and the wanderers beheld at its foot a level path, but one that seemed of darkness impenetrable and interminable. They, nevertheless, advanced; when they shortly found their escape checked by a sheet of dark water, that, as it gleamed dimly in the light of their dying torch,

seemed, indeed, like the gloomy stream sailed over 'by that grim ferryman the poets speak of.'—As they approached, however, it appeared to be a collection formed by the perpetual droppings from the arch above. They waded through it, and at the end of their progress found themselves in an apartment, long, narrow, and lofty, formed, like the passages, of rugged stone, and traversed crosswise by a low wall or screen which opened in the centre, and whose top was fortified with strong pointed iron spikes. Genevieve pushed it open, and when they had thus gained the interior division of the dungeon, she eagerly applied the key she had taken from Hugues to a lock she perceived on the inside of the screen. It turned in the massive wards—instinctively she locked and double locked it, and then placing her torch in an iron socket, she paused for a moment's breath and courage to enable her to examine this chamber of death. In the compartment they were in, her eye rested on nothing but four low doors of iron, which she doubted not led to remoter prisons, where the victims of the bishop's passions or power were conveyed never to return alive. She tried them all—all were fast secured. Mute and almost hopeless, she sunk back on a rude stone bench, above which the torch was suspended, and gazed around her, while the queen lay helplessly on her bosom weeping like a child.

It is at such a moment that every effaced or forgotten woe and terror presses back on the mind; and memory, with cruel and busy treachery, brings up all the past in aid of present calamity. She thought of that night of the subterranean escape from Carcassone, whose traces of terror were the first that had been inscribed on her infant memory. She recalled the maddening multitude ghastly with famine—the midnight shrieks—the plunge—the dark and perilous procession—the heat, the crush, the press, the struggle for life—for life, when children trod over their fallen parents, and mothers left their

infants! She clasped her hands over her temples to preserve her reason, but loosed them in a moment, and bent eagerly forward. The suppressed but busy hum of many voices reached her ear from one of the doors, to which a key seemed to be applying. She listened—it was no delusion, her companion heard it too. “We are betrayed,” cried Ingelberg, with a shriek that made the vaults re-echo.” “We are pursued—we are lost; God and St. Olave aid us in this extremity!”—“Hush, hush, for Heaven’s sake!” cried Genevieve, trembling with ecstasy, as she recognized the unforgotten tones of Amiralde amid the increasing murmur. An unknown voice was then heard loudly exclaiming, “By Heaven! lords, ye do me wrong: this is the door, and if the key fail, what hinders that ye break down the door with what weapons ye have?”

“This passage leads right onward to the queen’s chamber and——” “She is here—she is here!” cried Genevieve.—“Oh!” she cried, “as ye are true men, as ye are valiant knights, force, force the door, the life of a royal queen is in peril.”—“In the name of Heaven,” cried the voice of Amiralde, “by what chance?”—“Seek not to know—stay not to ask,” cried Genevieve, “bring axe and lever, and force the door on the instant—the life of the queen hangs on a moment.”

At the word, twenty battle-axes began to ring like thunder on the door, while the attendants put all their strength to the task, sawing away the bolts, and thrusting their lance-points between the crevices, to loosen and widen the apertures. The din was enough to “stun the living and waken the dead;” but louder still were heard the exulting shrieks and agonizing vows of Ingelberg to every saint in heaven, but chiefly to St. Olave, for protection and deliverance. There was need of them now; for at this moment Sir Ambrose, at the head of half the household, furnished with arms and torches, rushed in at the opposite end of the vault.

The noise at the door, and the sight of the queen and Genevieve gave him in a moment to understand all that he had to fear; and his rage was increased almost to distraction, when he found that the iron screen, which Genevieve had locked on the inside, formed an impenetrable barrier between him and his victims. While some ran hastily for instruments to force it, and others followed them to shun his fury, the priest fiercely required some of the attendants to clear the screen at a bound and seize on the prisoners. The most active, hoping an ample reward, instantly obeyed him. He cleared the screen; but his feet slipping on the damp pavement, he fell, and breaking his leg, lay writhing impotently, and shaking his hand at his intended victims. Another, undeterred by this mischance, made the attempt; but his mantle catching in one of the spikes dragged him back on it, and he hung there till lifted off, bleeding and lacerated, by his companions.

The door began to give way. "Draw thy bow," said the priest, in fury, to an archer who stood by him, "and send me an arrow through yon fugitive on the instant!"—"I am not used to draw a bow against women!" answered the man, sullenly.—"Slave and dog!" cried the furious priest, "do as thou art commanded, or I will have thee hung from the highest tower of the castle for the vultures to devour thy flesh, and the hooded crows to peck out thine eyes—alive—villain!—alive!"

The man slowly and reluctantly fitted the arrow to the string. "Whom must I aim at?" said he: "there be two of them, and foul wrong it were if the innocent should suffer."

"I am Ingelberg, the queen of France!" cried Genevieve, presenting herself to the mark of the assailant. As she spoke, the arrow quivered in her side, and she fell bathed in blood, at the feet of Ingelberg.

CHAPTER V.

Come, go with me. I will bestow thee straight
Among a sisterhood of holy nuns.

Romeo and Juliet.

THE first beginnings of recovered consciousness were to Genevieve accompanied by exquisite pain, and a gloomy confusion of ideas. As her fleeting senses returned, she perceived herself to be in a kind of litter, which however did not move : she felt also that her wound had been bound up ; and, after some vain and painful efforts to recollect how she had been wounded, or why she was thus confined, she slowly drew back the curtain of the litter, and attempted to revive her dim perceptions by the sight of surrounding objects. The night-breeze thus admitted, though it chilled her frame, restored her faculties, and she began to comprehend her situation, which, though one of comparative safety, seemed still full of "doubt and dread."

The night was rough and stormy ; masses of hurrying rack were driven fast across the moon, which, emerging from time to time, shed her full brief light on the group that surrounded the litter. Queen Ingelberg was in the centre, mounted on a noble steed, which she managed with a skill and spirit, that was more the result of habitual, than of native courage. She was surrounded by a band of armed knights on their war-steeds ; and their steely forms now gleaming out in the broad moonlight, and now enveloped in darkness, gave a shadowy and spectre-like hue to their figures and movements. The bishop's castle, like a huge pile of rock, stood darkling in the distance ; but the lights that flashed fast through every

loop-hole, the torches in the court that threw their sheets of vivid and abrupt light on the massive towers, and the increasing tramp and din within the walls, as the men-at-arms rushed to the sally-port, proved that the alarm had been given, and that the fugitives must owe their safety to speedy measures. They appeared to be holding eager and anxious consultation. "Take counsel for the wounded maiden first," were the first words that reached the ears of Genevieve; (it was the voice of Ingelberg.) "Take counsel, I say, first for the wounded maiden: if to you we owe our liberty, to her we first owed our life." Touched and melted by this grateful magnanimity, Genevieve drew the curtain wholly aside, and exerting her utmost strength, cried, "Set forward, noble knights, without delay: leave—leave me here. What is the life of a peasant damsel, weighed against the safety of a crowned queen?"—"We are, indeed, crowned queen," said Ingelberg, riding to her side. "But thou, methinks, wast borne one. Now by the soul of Waldemar, and the bones of blessed St. Olave, we stir not from this spot, till thy safety be cared for."—"Your grace lacks swift counsel in this strait," said Bernard de Vaugelas, who rode close beside her rein. "An if I may guess by the sound within yon towers, short space will be allowed to give or take it."—"What if we ride through the streets of Beaucaire, and raise the townsmen in aid of the queen of France," said Pierre de Limosin. "'Twill be the first time in their lives the *rascaille* were ever honoured by the summons of a knight, or the suit of a lady."—"The bishop would strait despoil the town of its privileges," said Vaugelas, "if one of his vile burghers wielded a bill, or shook a rusty target on our side."—"There is a convent," said a voice which thrilled through every fibre of Genevieve's frame, "a sisterhood of holy nuns not far distant: there may her grace take sanctuary, were the foul fiend chafing at the grate."—"To sanctuary then, a' God's name, and with what speed ye may!" quoth de

Vaugelas, closing the rivets of his helmet. "Hardly may De Limosin and myself, with our train, stem the torrent that will soon pour from yon barbican."—"Alas!" cried the queen, dropping her reins, "must my safety again be purchased at a price so dear? Hear me, Bernard de Vaugelas, if as a queen I can no longer command: as a lady and most distressed, I will not plead in vain to a loyal knight."—"My liege lady," said Vaugelas, with the proud gallantry of chivalry, "Honour your slave in your most generous thought so far as to believe him one who is not content alone to shiver a lance, or trill the lay of a wanton troubadour: no, on this spot to-night, he will leave bloody proof that the sovereign of his heart was also the lady of his life."—"I cannot fashion to set my words in such fair order," said the less polished de Limosin, couching his lance, "but, royal dame, I too *can die*." Their train gathered round the devoted knights. "Ah, Cœur d'Acier! ah, Bel-et-brave!" cried the queen, vainly addressing each by the *nom de caresse* she had bestowed on them in days of chivalric splendor and regal festivity—"Did ye not swear to me on the faith of knighthood, that ye would refuse me no boon demanded in those names?"—"Sir Amirald," said de Vaugelas, in a low voice, "by thy lady's love, and as thou wouldst have the benison of thy saint in thy mortal hour, convey the queen to safety: hark! they are lowering the draw-bridge." "Farewell, my liege!" cried de Limosin, "one tear for my tomb, and one mass for my soul, all thy loyal lover now can crave."—"No tears for me, my sovereign dame!" said the courtly Vaugelas: "my soul would be sad in paradise, if I thought my lady wept."—"Farewell ye priceless friends!" cried the queen in tears, as she turned her reins to ride: "alas! the dark stream that I saw in my vision, was it to foretel me this?"

The train set forward at the command of Vaugelas, and in the pain produced by the motion of the rudely constructed litter, Genevieve soon lost all

consciousness, and with it all the perils of her flight and the tumult of the conflict, whose sounds of terror pursued them for miles beyond the walls of the castle, where the safety of the queen was fiercely contended for by Vaugelas and Limosin.

By the light of the grey dawn, the fugitives found themselves in a narrow valley of considerable extent, bearing the same proportion to a champaign landscape, that a long gallery or passage does to the more spacious and splendid apartments of the mansion, yet not without its grace as well as its utility. A small stream wandered through it; its high precipitous banks of stone, like proud neighbours, overshadowing and almost concealing it; between their fissures many a tree was bending its branches, and interlacing its knotted roots—the boughs of some almost met over the narrow stream, and those of others closed around the low roofs of a small religious edifice dimly seen at the extremity of the valley. The objects thus gradually and partially developed partook of the character of the light by which they were beheld;—all was quiet, sombrous, and still. The travellers urged on their weary steeds, and followed with difficulty a track, rather than a path, that winding sometimes among rocks, and sometimes through water, was always so overshadowed by the branches of the trees, that the riders were compelled to bend to their horses' manes to pass through them. At length they approached the building as the last toll of a faint bell summoned its inmates to matins.

The building itself, simple almost to meanness, and nearly hidden among trees and rocks, gave no unapt image of an eremite amid his shades and solitude, humble, lonely, and sequestered. The unusual summons of a bugle at their peaceful gates, brought not only the portress, but the Abbess to the portal; the former held a feeble taper—for it was still twilight; the figure of the latter appeared faintly in the rear. "Shelter and sanctuary, holy mother, for a forlorn wanderer?" cried Ingelberg, "for one who

flies in peril through the land of which she is the queen.”—“And thou shalt have it, royal daughter!” said the Abbess, flinging her veil over the head of the queen with a solemn air of protection, “were all the kings in Christentye thundering at this feeble gate for entrance. Enter in safety and peace; and, for thou knowest,” she added, viewing Ingelberg’s escort, “the strict rule of our order forbids the approach of man nearer than our grate, yonder knight with his train may harbour in a near hamlet.” As she spoke, Sir Amirald had alighted and knelt to the queen, who extended to him her hand to kiss—“Pardon, my sovereign lady!” he cried: “my duty is fulfilled, and my task finished here. I left pledge beneath the towers of the bishop of Toulouse, and must redeem it or give life in exchange.”—“I know thy meaning,” said Ingelberg; “and wilt thou, then, for some fantastic toys of honour, desert thy queen and thy duty? Are thy life, and the commands of thy liege lady, of such light avail that a romantic scruple can outweigh them both?”—“By a true knight, royal dame,” said Amirald, “his life is ever held cheap, when poized with a lady’s commands, but both are underpriced when weighed with that which alone gives to life its value, or to a lady’s commands the right to be obeyed—even his honour:” and, as he spoke, he flung himself on his war steed. “Am I the Queen of France?” cried Ingelberg. “Am I she at whose lightest word the brand of a thousand knights have leaped, as alive, from their sheaths, and who now am denied boon by one?”—“Detain him—Oh, detain him yet, sovereign lady,” cried Genevieve. At the well-remembered voice, Amirald rode round to the litter, and, withdrawing the curtain, gazed on her for a moment—“Now were my dishonour complete,” he cried, “were it beheld not only by the sovereign of my life, but the lady of my love,” and, as he spoke, he fiercely pursued his way back to the castle of Beaucaire.

CHAPTER VI.

What means this tumult in a Vestal's veins ?

POPE.

THOUGH Genevieve's wound on examination proved so slight that it was obvious the archer had purposely consulted her safety while he gave it, the tenderness of the queen would not suffer her for some days to quit her cell or her pallet. This interval she passed almost in utter solitude ; for Ingelberg, exhausted by fatigue and emotion, remained in her apartment ; and the nuns, when they had discovered that their guest was a heretic, (from her possessing neither cross nor rosary, and making no use of holy water) took care to remain no longer near her than was necessary for dressing her wound and supplying her with food. This solitude was as delicious to her as it was dangerous. Even amid suffering and peril the images of both had been effaced by the parting exclamation of Amirald ; and now, in the stillness and repose of her cell, her mental eye rested with unwearied luxury of gaze on the bright scenes of its internal and new-found world of felicity. From the moment that she had felt that compassion for a wounded and deserted youth was rapidly exchanging for a sensation new, indefinable, and tumultuous, she guarded her heart against his image with a vigilance and firmness that suffered itself neither to be surprised nor seduced into admitting its approach for a moment. The insurmountable inequalities of rank and of religion, of station and habit, helped to sustain her fortitude, and aid her in the discipline of her heart, and though she could not make it cease to feel without making it cease to beat, yet so closely was its secret guarded, that the only indications of its existence were an increasing indifference to all

that had interested her before, and sometimes a sigh, for which she condemned herself the moment it was breathed. But Amiral's proclaiming her with his own lips the lady of his love, (a term much more significant in those days than ours,) had now alike banished doubt and constraint, and, though she deemed the obstacles to happiness or even to hope as impracticable as ever, yet still, by the deep delusions of passion, all felicity seemed comprehended in the consciousness of its mere existence ; and the image of him she loved seemed sufficient for the occupation of her heart during the whole period of after-life. "Years hence," she thought, "those who see me shall say, 'Why does that pale maiden sigh when she sees a noble knight ride past?' but none shall be able to answer."

It was on the third evening after her arrival at the convent that the queen and Genevieve joined the nuns at the hour of supper. In the refectory and its furniture, as well as in the appearance of the groupe that occupied it, there was a tone of severity exceeding the usual rigour of conventual discipline, and which displayed a striking contrast to the gorgeous garments of the queen and her companion. The walls were of stone ; a stone bench, extending the length of one of them, formed a seat ; a coarse table, an iron lamp suspended from the ceiling, and a massive and grotesquely-carved chair, with wooden footstool, resigned by the abbess to the queen, formed all the furniture. As the rules of the community prohibited even the *sight* of meat at their board, the queen's repast was fish, an egg, and honey ; and her beverage water. Genevieve partook of its remains, while the food of the abbess and nuns was roots which they had themselves reared and prepared ; and they partook sparingly of the pure element with which the coarse cup of wood in the centre of the table was filled. The silent meal concluded, the nuns retired, and the queen began to converse in a low voice with the abbess. The countenance and expression of the

latter rivetted Genevieve's eyes, as she stood reverently behind the chair of the queen. The visages of the poor nuns had exhibited nothing beyond gloom and apathy, graduated according to the various lengths of their experience of a conventual existence, and the variety of temperaments on which that experience had to operate ; but the features of the abbess wore that singular character of the expression of youth mingled with the lines of age, which characterises countenances where grief has been anticipating the work of time. The lustre of her full dark eye was unimpaired, and the noble regularity of her profile still possessed and proclaimed the high intellectual character associated with that class of features ; but her cheeks were wan and hollow ; and, as a few locks (which she hastily replaced) strayed from beneath her frontlet or her veil, the grey far outnumbered the black hairs—once blacker than the raven's plume. Genevieve gazed intently on her most interesting aspect, while the queen continued conversing rather *to* than *with* her, and the abbess telling her beads the while, listened with the air of one whose mind was wandering far both from her companion and her occupation. " Yes, my reverend mother," said the queen, " it was within these walls I was confined by order of King Philip,* while the cruel and unfounded process for our divorce was carried on, spite of the authority of the Pope, and the menaces of my brother, king Canute of Denmark ; and here, in place of a stern monastic gaoler, I met one who, amid the chill of a cloister, had yet a pang for insulted royalty and a tear for injured love."—" It was my duty," said the abbess : "*haud ignara mali*," she added, with a painful smile ; then checking herself, " I forgot that I had abjured all my profaner studies."—" And, reverend mother," said the queen, " deem you not that, when certain agents have been employed in the ordering of matters fairly

* She was confined in the convent of Soissons.

and fortunately to our wish, and such agents again surround us, bearing in the time and all other circumstance of their appearing a meet proportion to their former relation, that it is a kind of augury—a betokening—How shall I term it?—mine heart feels meaning, though my lips can frame no word for it.” The abbess replied, “that it might be so; but that it was dangerous to build too close analogies on the mysterious and far-reaching dispensations of providence.”—“Here are we,” said the queen, explaining herself by facts, “under the very roof where we first tasted the offices of sisterly and christian love; and hither were we led in safety by that Sir Amiral, to whom, at the time of which we speak, we owed our honour and our crown as by a miracle!”—“A miracle!” repeated the abbess, raising her eyes.—“It seemed no less,” said the queen; * for, when the pleading for my divorce was held before the Pope’s legate, under the roof of the bishop of Paris, and the advocates of the king urged their reasons with such force and sharpness, that, when the crier proclaimed ‘let the queen’s advocates come forth,’ none appeared in answer, then stepped there forth an unknown youth in our cause, who ordered his reasons with such sententious and weighty wisdom, and a gravity so learned and modest withal, that the king himself, as one amazed, put a stop to the pleading, and we were saved from disgrace and defeat, at least on that day; but, when the king caused search to be made for the advocate, no man knew aught of him, nor did we till lately learn that it was this Sir Amiral, who, though he thought no scorn to take on him the office of advocate for a distressed queen, yet would not have it known, as less befitting a knight than a cowed churchman or coifed son of peace:—but, mercy of Heaven! whence was that din?” she exclaimed;—

* This singular anecdote is told, I think, by Mezeray. The interposition of the unknown advocate was deemed supernatural.

"one at the portal seeks entrance." "No horn hangs at our peaceful gates," replied the abbess; and as she spoke the ancient porteress appeared. "An armed knight is at the gate," said she, "seeking to speak with the queen."—"What is his name?"—"I know not, madam."—"His cognizance?" demanded the queen.—"Alas!" said the poor recluse, "he looked so bright and terrible in his armour, that I hasted away; but his voice was like that of the young knight who rode beside your highness that morn."—"Sir Amiralde!" cried the queen, exultingly. "Now, by the soul of Waldemar,* there be hopes;" and, hurrying Genevieve along with her, they presented themselves at the grate; and never, in the wide luxury of a veranda'd casement, did beauty look so interesting as through the rude and narrow grate of a convent. The hardness of the frame augments while it contrasts the loveliness of the portraits which it encloses. Sir Amiralde dismounted, and, kneeling on one knee, gracefully doffed his casque to salute the queen, while his eyes were fixed on Genevieve alone. "Now, thou truant knight," said Ingelberg, "how darest thou venture into the presence of a queen thou hast so lately disobeyed and deserted?"—"So please you, royal dame," said Amiralde, the brightest suffusion of joy dyeing his cheek and brow with vermillion, "the tidings I bear embolden me to press into your presence, were my fault even more heinous."—"Now, Heaven, if it be thy will—Bernard de Vaugelas and——"—"Are living men, and still bear stout heart and strong lance for the service of the queen." Ingelberg with devout gratitude began to tell her beads: "And better thus employed," she cried, "than in causing masses to be said for their souls. But haste thee and tell me."—"They were made prisoners by the bishop's men; and, being lodged in the same tower, and waited on by one who

* Her father.

had been about your highness's person during your thralldom, and who feared that the bishop on his return would take his life, he contrived a means of escape, on condition he might accompany them, and now have they reached the vicinage without discovery or pursuit, purporting to join you to-morrow in your meditated flight, should you still," he added, with a peculiar expression, "mean to pursue it."—"To-night, to-night," cried the impatient queen; "this very night will I set forth. The bishop may pursue—king Philip may discover my course; a lost hour is perchance the loss of liberty, of—"—"Your grace does not lack their aid to win your liberty," said Amirald, his countenance assuming increasing resplendency of colour and expression; "it is achieved already. The remonstrances of the Holy Father, and the repinings of Agnes of Moravia, have changed the heart of king Philip: he waits to welcome you again as his spouse and queen. The pope, for this concession, legitimates the children of Agnes. All is at peace between the Louvre and the Vatican; and your faithful knights, instead of aiding the flight of a fugitive, will now grace the progress of a glorious queen, returning to dwell among princes and palaces."—"It is too much happiness," said the queen faintly, while giving him her hand through the grate to kiss, she leaned back exhausted on the shoulder of Genevieve: then suddenly relapsing into suspicion and fear—those habitual guests that do not soon forbear the mansion they have begun to inhabit.—"And how," she cried, "does this suit the tidings we have heard, that our son, prince Lewis, is leading a strong force in aid of the crusaders, whilst king Philip never advanced mark or man before in the cause? And must it not be on the sad condition that I shall be the thrall of the bishop of Toulouse?"—"By all the saints—by all and aught that knight or Christian may swear by," said Amirald, his features on fire with the earnestness of that conviction he felt, and feeling, impressed on his hearer, "the

tidings I bear are mere truth. Ask Bernard de Vaugelas else. Prince Lewis, at the head of a strong band, will not lightly be won to quit his post. Nay, royal dame, image to thyself a valiant prince at the head of a host he was panting to lead, would he be checked in his course of chivalry and conquest by the long-suspended, and often-contradicted commands of the king of France?"—"Thou persuadest me to hope even against hope!" said the queen, "and I will believe thee. Now, whom," she cried, in the natural effusion of a beneficent heart, "whom shall I make happy? Kingdoms would I give at this moment, were kingdoms in my gift! By the rights of our recovered queendom we will not leave this spot, till thou, loyal knight, and thou, loving damsel, have asked and won a boon worthy of a sovereign to bestow."—"Sovereigns can bestow honour," said Amirald, faltering and blushing, "but love alone can give felicity."—"Ha! goes it there," said the queen, smilingly: "Why, god-a-mercy, boy, thou must have a Belle-amie before thou hast a beard. I think thy lips be as smooth as those of any lady in our court. Well, when we win Paris, if this lady Guinever of thine refuse the intercession of a queen, we will deem her lacking in courtesy."—"She is not there," Amirald was about to say, while his eyes fixed on Genevieve were pleading still more eloquently; but the queen, too happy to heed him, had turned to her favourite. "For thee," she said, placing her hand on the brow of Genevieve,—"for thee we will shape out a noble fortune. Thou shalt with us to the court, thy matchless beauty shall lack no aid of rich attire, and ample dower; and the proudest noble in king Philip's palace shall not think scorn to mate with the peasant maiden who saved the queen of France."—"Oh, not to the court, my sovereign," replied Genevieve, with deep but respectful firmness:—"not to the court, if it please the queen? I should deem it foul shame, if, while my people eat the bread and drank the water of affliction,

I were dwelling in palaces. I should be a mournful, ill-placed, abused thing! Never—oh, never will I revel on dainties, while they dig the earth for roots, or eat the grass of the field! Never will I be robbed in sinful and superfluous luxury, while they shiver in cold and nakedness! Never will I couch on down, while their bed is the rock; and that pale sightless old man," she said, with increasing emotion, "I should hear his voice amid the music of a royal bower: while I paced through palaces, he would tell me he lacked a guide in the desert. Oh! pardon, royal dame, if my words offend! but never—never—" and the agonizing tears of recollection burst forth and choked her voice. Ingelberg was affected for a moment, then struggling with feelings which her faith condemned—"We have sworn deeply," she said, "that we will not hence, till thou hast asked a boon; nor may the oath be forfeited! Speak, then, maiden, and remember it is not easy to task the gratitude of a friend, or the power of a sovereign."—"Royal lady," said Genevieve, kneeling and kissing her robe, "since he, in whose hand are the hearts of kings, turned thine husband's towards thee again, oh! win him to deal gently with his suffering subjects. Trust me, my liege, hearts more loyal beat not in living bosoms; hands more bold never wielded lance in fields of battle. Let our liege but yield us the grace to worship Him in whom we trust after the dictates of our conscience, and of his word, and then shall our sovereign see all through fair Languedoc, every man sitting under his vine and his olive, fearing God and honouring the King." Queen Ingelberg shook her head—"Thou proposest hard matter, maiden," she said; "but, though it cost the king's displeasure, I will not fail to redeem my word. We will send holy priests, not armed knights, to convert thine erring people; and oh, that thou mayst be the first-fruits of that milder mission! and now," she added cheerfully, "the queen hath a boon to ask of thee. Wear this for my sake," she said, de-

teaching a carkanet of jewels from her neck, and fastening it round that of Genevieve: "Now beshrew thee and thy peevish heresy, that will not let thee visit the court, were it but to show how well a carkanet suits thy white and graceful neck. I ask it not as a boon," she added, more seriously, "that thou wilt wear this ring of small price," putting it on her finger. "It is marked with my name, and thou wilt prize it, not as the gift of the queen, but as the memorial of Ingelberg."

At sight of the costly ornament of gems, Genevieve burst into transports of grateful joy, and the queen drew back disappointed and displeased. "If we are to learn that thou prizest these toys," she said, "we can enrich thee, peasant, beyond thy wishes, yea, thy very dreams."—"Royal dame," said Genevieve, while a proud but modest suffusion dyed her cheek, "When thy vassal dies, those who are beside her corse shall find this treasured ring next her heart; but for these jewels—their price is yet more precious to me. It shall procure a guide for him from whom cruel men have rent both his eyes, and his child, whose aid made him half forget their loss; yea, on thyself, queen, shall the gift be visited in blessings. It shall extort prayers for thee from many a bleeding and many a broken heart. They shall contend with and prevail against the cries that arise hourly to the throne of God against our slayers and persecutors. For me," she added, repressing her enthusiasm, "foul shame it were, if, while youth and health remain, I sought subsistence from the bounty that the weak and aged lack. The labour of her own hands shall clothe the peasant maiden with garments meet for her, and God will give her food."

"Alas!" exclaimed the queen, kissing her forehead with a sudden impulse of admiring love—"Alas! that thou *wilt* be a heretic: but," she added, "in this thy self-forgetfulness, order must be taken for thee: whither wilt thou go, and what is thy purpose?" Genevieve expressed her humble wish to

seek shelter with some relatives in Toulouse ; “ And if I must weary my liege for a boon,” she added, “ let me have a safeguard thither, that I may meet no hindrance or wrong.”—“ Sir Amirald himself with a chosen band of men-at-arms (maugre all the crosses on their breasts) shall be thy guide, thou false heretic,” said the queen, playfully entwining her fingers in Genevieve’s dark luxuriant ringlets as she spoke:—“ Will such guard content thee?” Elated yet trembling at the words, Genevieve felt half about to say “ aught of peril but his presence ;” but she checked herself, half from awe of the presence in which she stood, half from an internal yielding, which she condemned while she submitted to it ; and murmured, “ it must be as the queen and the noble knight shall will it.” “ As the noble knight shall will it ! as the queen commands,” said Ingelberg, resuming rapidly the language of royalty. “ Sir Amirald, we command thee to guard this fair damsel where she listeth, but look that thou convert her by the way,” she added smiling. “ And now me-seems that errand is not all unwelcome : there was a gleam on thy features like summer lightning as I spoke.” The young lover bowed to hide his blushes from the queen. “ For thee, Amirald,” said Ingelberg, “ we will ourself be the builder of thy fortunes : trust our royal word, and we will give the solemn pledge for its redemption. Hie, maiden, to the abbess, and ask from her that priceless relique we consigned to her care the night her walls first sheltered us.”

Genevieve soon returned with the abbess, who placed the relique, inclosed in a small box of silver, in the hands of the queen, and then dropping her veil at the sight of a man before the grate, stood apart. “ Take this relique,” said the queen, attaching it to a chain of gold. “ It holds the holy dust gathered from the bones of the Protomartyr, who perished at Jerusalem under the hands of his fierce and bloody countrymen. Why lingerest thou ? Seek-

est thou aught more from us ?"—“Beyond all that pilgrim or palmer ever bore from holy land,” said the young knight, blushing as he knelt, “would I prize the silken band that binds yon maiden’s hair.”—“A silken band !” said the queen “nay we will give with that a lock of the dark and silken hair it entwines.”

Genevieve did not presume to resist, while the queen with her own hands cut off a lock of hair as rich as ever crowned the head of regal beauty. “Now,” said the queen, “yield him thy white hand to kiss.” Genevieve retreated. “The noble knight,” she said, “must not profane his lips on the hand of a peasant maiden.”—“When hath he kissed a fairer in a royal bower ?” said Ingelberg, seizing her hand, and offering it through the grate to Amiralde. At this moment the abbess wrapped her veil around her and retired. The movement was unobserved by the rest ; the queen triumphed in the interchanged pledges of valour and beauty, which revived all the associations of her former chivalric and courtly existence. The young knight trembled as he kissed the white hand extended to him, as if it were rather accorded to the command of the queen, than the act of the possessor ; and a new and nameless sensation trembled through the pure frame of Genevieve, when she felt the soft lip of Amiralde, for the first time, touch and press her hand. “We are wearied,” said the queen, reclining on the shoulder of Genevieve ; “we are wearied,” laughing and wiping away her tears, “with excess of happiness ; we will retire to our cell, and pass the night in orisons to the saints for our present felicity and our future hopes. And oh,” she said, “oh that thou couldst share them !”

CHAPTER VII.

Oh ye dead ! Oh ye dead ! whom we know by the light ye give,
From your cold gleaming eyes, though ye move like those that
live.

It is true, it is true, we are shadows cold and wan,
It is true, it is true, the friends that we loved are gone.

Moore's Irish Melodies.

GENEVIEVE's full heart felt its need of orisons too ; she trembled at the perils of her situation, though it seemed now to embrace all that was delightful to hope, or flattering to love. The increasing tumult of her heart began to terrify her, and she resolved to commune with it in solitude, and, if she could, to bid it be still.

After attending the queen to her oratory, Genevieve, with that impulse caught from her early habits, which prompted her ever to pour forth her prayers, when she could, amid the liberty of nature and the light of heaven, hastened to the garden of the convent. The enclosure (so called) was of as simple and austere a character as the fabric to which it belonged ; no flowers were cultivated there ; it contained only vegetables for the food of the recluses, and vulnerary or sanative herbs for the use of the sick and maimed whom they tended ; one broad and grassy walk extended its entire length, lined on either side by tall pines, whose branches, almost meeting above, gave to the passenger the idea of traversing a cloister. At the end of this walk a hoarse and shallow stream interrupted by its sole sound the deep repose of the scene, its waters darkened by the shade of the trees ; on the bank was a rude seat formed of the trunk of a fallen tree, a similar block bore a human skull, and on the surface of the wood these words had been

carved by the abbess, "*huc virgo veni, virgo mæsta veni—hic umbræ, fontes, pax.*"

The gloom, quiet, and repose of this spot, over which the darkening shades of an autumnal twilight began to gather, were grateful to the harassed spirit of Genevieve: she moved slowly and in silence among the trees, with eyes upturned, watching the decreasing light as it gleamed between their branches; and it was not till she reached the termination of the walk, that she perceived the abbess seated and gazing upwards, while the tears came slowly down her pale cheek. Genevieve was retreating, with a timid apology for her intrusion, when the abbess caught her arm, and with silent emphatic gesture detained her. Genevieve, conscious of the difference of their creeds, and fearful of some proof of fruitless zeal, was again attempting to retire, when the abbess, pointing to her cell, signified her wish that Genevieve should follow her thither; she obeyed, and, on their entering it, the abbess closed the door, and gazed on her for some moments in silence; at length, "Thou lovest," she said. Genevieve was silent.—The abbess pointed emphatically to her own pale cheek and wasted figure, "Behold," she said, "the fate of her who loves." And in the long and melancholy conversation that followed, she eloquently painted the progress of that disastrous passion which bestowed on its victims immortality and wretchedness. At its close she read to Genevieve part of a letter she had been writing, and of which every page was blotted with her tears.

'*Deum testem invoco, si Augustus universum præsidens mundum, matrimonii honore dignaretur, totumque mihi orbem confirmaret in perpetuo præsidendum, charius mihi ac dignius videretur, tua dici amica,* quàm illius imperatrix.*'—"Go, maiden," she said, after reading these words, "and when thou

* The original expression is somewhat stronger. Vide Rankin's History of France, vol. iii.

too weepst thy hopeless love, remember the abbess Eloise, and the convent of the Paraclete." She closed the scroll, and she and her hearer remained mute for some moments, the one from remembered, the other from existing associations. They started mutually at a sound seldom heard within those walls till of late, a knocking at the gate; the ancient portress tottered into the chamber. "Who is he that would seek us?"—"He calls himself the Monk of Montcalm," said the portress, "and he saith he hath heavy tidings to utter."—"He is a gracious and a holy man," said the abbess; "say we will see him on the instant."—"Stay thee, maiden," she added to Genevieve, as the sandals of the aged monk were heard in the passage to the apartment of the abbess. His pale, ascetic, almost spiritualized form appeared at the low and narrow door of the chamber. The abbess rose as the portress held a dim light beneath the pointed arch of the door, and the conventual salutation of *Benedicite*, and *Pax vobiscum*, passed between them. "Reverend mother," said the monk, "I am the bearer of tidings which, even in these times of woe and fear, lack parallel."—"Such tidings," said the abbess, "ever visit the abode of grief—the messenger knows his way, and chooses his fittest sojourn. But what are thy tidings, holy monk?—It were a mournful pleasure if an exhausted source could feel its streams flow once more. I fear me there was but one hand that could touch their spring—and that—opened them once, and then they closed for ever."—"Reverend dame," said the monk, hasting to deliver his mission, "I have journeyed to tell thee that, on to-morrow's night the monks of holy St. John, of Beaucaire, will sing a mass in the church of Paraclete, for the soul of the lady Isabelle of Courtenaye, who was murdered on her bridal night by a hand unknown;—but not," he added, shuddering, "unsuspected."

The abbess Eloise sat silent and horror-struck at the tidings. "Where was the bridegroom?" she

said at length. The monk crossed himself, and shuddered.—“Her uncle—her kinsmen—her wooers?” repeated Eloise. The monk prepared to answer; and as he stood before the abbess, who was seated, and had placed the lamp far behind her, so that only her features and form were visible in dark profile, while the light fell full on the pale features, naked feet, and withered hands of the ascetic, which were clasped on the staff he leant on—the dark drapery that shrouded his form, all invisible in that dim light—they appeared to Genevieve like a being from the world of spirits, disclosing its secrets to a summoning prophetess. “The dark and bloody house of Courtenaye,” he said, “hath achieved its dark and bloody destiny:—its wars and wrongs and ravages have met their fearful consummation. Thou knowest, reverend mother, the crimes of that house of blood, and thou mayest, perchance, have heard the dark prophecy of that Marie de Mortemar, who had undergone such wrong from them and their brothers in arms, as Christian land never witnessed, and Christian tongue cannot utter.”—“I have heard report,” said the abbess, “that the fiery arrow should pierce through the towers of Courtenaye, but I knew not, or regarded the import of these dark words.”—“They have been fulfilled,” said the monk. “The arrow hath prostrated the castle to its foundation-stone. There was not a noble maid in all France wooed far and near like the lady of Courtenaye: but she rejected all in the pride of her beauty, till among the Crusaders there arrived at her castle a stranger, whom men called Sir Paladour de la Croix Sanglante. No one knew his birth, his kindred, or descent; but there went a hushed and mysterious whisper through the castle that *he* was that visionary being—that spectre bridegroom who came to fulfil the fearful prophecy. If he were such, never did Satan, since his fall, clothe himself more like an angel of light. I need not tell thee of the glorious beauty of that faultless form,” he said; “such image

should never visit the fancy of a holy recluse.”—
“Thou needest not,” said the abbess; then averting her head, she murmured,—“Such vision too oft haunts her dreams.” “There was somewhat superhuman,” said the monk, “not only in his form, but in his deeds.—With more than mortal might he confronted the Count de Monfort in the lists in rescue of the lady Isabelle’s lands and person from the claim of King Philip—with more than mortal might he contended in that fierce and fruitless battle which the crusading knights fought with the army of the Count of Toulouse, at the mad instigation of Simon de Monfort—with more than mortal arm did he strive with the bold outlaw named L’Aigle sur la Roche. The attendants of the lady said that an unearthly figure aided him there, and struck a dagger into the outlaw’s heart. How it chanced I cannot tell: the tale was rife in the months of the vassals when the lady returned in safety; and she would prove her love to him who had saved her from both, and would wed him and make him lord of her wide lands and countless dower. The Lord of Courtenay consented. I joined their hands, but I swear to thee, reverend mother, as I uttered the holy words of the sacrament of marriage, I deemed that I joined the hand of a marble statue to that of the bride; and never from statue or portrait glared eyes so fixed and lifeless as those of Sir Paladour. And, on the bridal night, when some late revellers still loitered in the hall, there was heard a cry like that once heard in Egypt on her night of doom. At the voice of that cry the revellers started from their feast, and hastened to the nuptial chamber; but death had been already there—the bride lay a corse on the bridal bed, her bosom streaming with blood. No mortal weapon was in that chamber of death. The bridegroom had departed, and, ere the cry of horror had well ceased, cries louder and louder issued from a lower apartment from the closed door of which flames and bricks came bursting forth together. We hast-

ened thither, and there was a scene, such as never was wrought by those profane players in their painted passions and tragical horrors. Smoke and sparks issued from the door of the chamber, and its wretched inmate was shrieking that he burned!—he burned!—it was known or imagined on what task he was employed; and that those who may not be named within these walls were his associates in his unutterable work. The door was fast—the key lost—men wrought with axe and crow, and the roof and ceiling was broken up, and water poured on the flames; but below, as the waters hissed and sunk on the embers of the burning chamber, mine eyes beheld all the awful implements of that dread and accursed work—the inverted cross, the seething cauldron, the triangular stone with its ghastly central gleam, magic-wrought, and magic-bright, and blazing 'mid all that conflagration; the abused relics of the dead, skull and bone disposed in mockery, flames of every colour, and the horrid crisped lumps of ashes, which had been but a few moments past the agents in that work. Whether the flames that consumed them burst from the unholy ingredients of their employ, or were kindled by the dark and fiery spirits who are mantled in them, in their unfathomable dwellings of torment and of flame, it were alike impossible to tell and fearful to conjecture.” The monk paused; he dared not tell that he himself had seen a hellish form spring from beneath, seize the lord of Courtenaye, and plunge him yelling amid the flames that closed round them both for ever.

At the end of this awful communication, the abbess, the monk, and Genevieve, remained in deep silence. There is a species of horror attached to certain narratives, which, while it repels belief, forces conviction. In such divided state of mind, though from various causes, sat the party for one fearful and silent hour. “Holy monk,” said the abbess, at length breaking silence, “wilt thou not partake of such humble refecton as our cloister can offer?”—“I have

tasted bread and water thrice this day," said the pale ascetic skeleton; "more than enough for a mortal frame; that would not be bowed down by carnal heaviness and pampered sloth. The spirit's burthen is enough; let us not add to it the weight of earthly indulgence to damp the pinion, whose overburthened flight will never soar heaven-ward." "There may be a heavier burthen on its wings," sighed the abbess, as the monk retired to pace his way to the monastery of Beaucaire. "Now part we," she said to Genevieve.—"Nay, let me watch with thee, reverend lady," said Genevieve; "though I must not mingle prayer with thee, perchance mine aspirations may not pollute the incense of the sacrifice?"—"It may not be so," said Eloise. "Order must be taken in the convent for the celebration of this bridal hymn—this sepulchral dirge, I would say. Alas!" she added, raising her eyes with an expression of wild and profound melancholy, "how many wandering thoughts beset me!"—then suddenly, as talking to herself, "*She* died blessedly by the hand of him she loved,—a single deep-dealt blow.—She had not to linger for the heart-gnawing, cold, slow, sedentary murderer, Grief."

As she spoke, she summoned a lay-sister, to give order for the ceremony of the night, and Genevieve retired to her cell. She felt her need of profound rest to prepare her for her early setting forth with the queen on her journey, but she knew not that an exhausted frame and an excited mind are the most inveterate foes to that rest which both require. She prayed fervently, and slept soon, but not without seeing, amid her devotions, and even after she had closed her eyes, the pale form of the victim-bride in every corner of her narrow chamber. The visions that thus disturbed her waking thoughts held increased power over her slumbers, and in her dreams she thought she was traversing a dark and dreary mountain-path, at the extremity of which a light was twinkling. This melancholy reminiscence of her

former existence seemed like a renewal of it, and she wept as she had done in her infant wanderings, weariness, and peril. Suddenly she was alone—all her companions appeared to have left her. She dreamed that she approached the light alone—it gleamed from a hole in a hovel. She asked for admittance, and a hoarse voice answered, “We are watching our dead.” She was at last admitted, and saw the corse of a man extended on a bed, and a woman watching beside it, whose face was concealed. In a short time, the woman retired, and the corse rose upright, not at once, or suddenly, but slowly and deliberately. It rose, quitted the bed, and beckoned Genevieve to follow. She followed, in her dream, till they reached a church-yard, where the ghastly figure beckoned her onwards; she shuddered, and retreated: at that moment, he half unfolded his shroud, as if in token of invitation. She retreated faster; and the scene suddenly changed to a splendid hall, such as her late conversations with the queen had painted in vivid colours on her imagination. The board was spread with dainties, and surrounded by nobles and beauties gorgeously attired. At the head of the board sat Sir Amirald, and beside him was placed an empty chair. He looked pale and abstracted; but in a moment, as he beheld Genevieve, his features were flushed with the glow of passion and joy, and he sprang forward, to lead her to the vacant seat.—At that moment, her late fearful companion appeared close by her side, and seized her hand, exclaiming, “Since you will not come to meet me, I have come to meet you.”—As the vision spoke, the shroud disappeared from its form and features, and she beheld the corse, for so it seemed, of Amand. The touch of his hand at first seemed to burn like fire—then it became colder than ice.—She shrieked, and awoke. It was not for some time that she recovered her recollection, and, when she did, the objects by which she was surrounded made her almost doubt the evidence of her senses. She found herself in an apart-

ment of the convent larger than she had yet beheld; some rude figures of stone, ranged in niches along the walls, and some still ruder attempts at ornament, in the roof, were dimly descried by the light of two torches of black wax, that burned before a painting obscure and hardly seen; opposite to her was a hearse, with small black banners at each corner, and covered with a pall of black, on which was wrought a silver crucifix. Her eyes at length rested on an altar, from which the usual decorations of flowers, vases, and embroidery, were removed, and which displayed only a crucifix of wood as black as ebony. After gazing long on these objects, her perceptions began to return, and she comprehended her situation. She was in the church of the Paraclete, furnished as it was for the masses to be said for the soul of the lady Isabelle, and she at once conceived that she must have wandered there in her sleep, a habit which the broken and fearful slumbers of her childhood had induced, and which had probably been renewed by the terror and intensity of the images that had troubled her dreams that night. She arose, and looked round her, but no longer with terror. A profound melancholy, mingled with grief and awe, pervaded her heart as she beheld these memorials of faded loveliness and prostrate pride. From the conversation of Eloise and the monk, she had learned, that that "lady of the cave," whom she encountered in her solitary wanderings, and whose beauty and splendid garb had, amid such a scene, made her appear like a queen of Faerie, was that lady Isabelle, whose surpassing beauty she had beheld—whose obsequies she now witnessed. "And art thou she?" Genevieve exclaimed,—“art thou she who didst pass all the daughters of men in beauty; who sattest in thy pride of life so far above me, that I deemed it almost an insult to grasp thy garment's hem; yet, to-night I might, unhidden, touch thy shroud? Oh! how glorious wast thou in thy loveliness! Yet thou *hast perished*; and yet I love to linger on the image

of what thou wast—so beautiful, proud, and yet gentle :—there was a trembling loveliness about thee in thy haughtiest mood and moment ; and, when thou seemedst to offer protection to me, it was as if thou seemedst to supplicate for thyself.” Her eyes again were fastened on the hearse with its banners and blazon. She shuddered and murmured—“ And what avails this pageantry of death ? and oh, what availed the pageantry of thy bridal, when nobles held thy rein, and their daughters bore thy train ? And that being, not of this world, flashing the light of his demon eyes on thee, and fixing in thy bosom the fangs of murder !”

She cast back one involuntary glance on the hearse as she retired—a spectacle was there that nailed her to the spot where she stood, and froze the blood in her veins.—The figure of the departed stood by the hearse, in form, stature, attitude, as in life ; but not in hue or expression. resembling aught that is mortal :—it was folded in a shroud :—what seemed its arms, were clasped across its bosom ; and, though the face was visible, the colourless and moveless features brought to the memory of Genevieve such recollection of the living as her image wrought in marble would. Beauty was there ; but it was a beauty “ not of this world”—the eyes alone seemed gleaming with intense and supernatural light ; but they appeared fixed like lamps in sockets of stone. So she stood, pale in immortal beauty—blending the associations of divided worlds, bearing the character of all that is sad in the present, all that is awful in the future. Genevieve’s first impulse was to fly ; but her feet seemed rooted like those of the apparition ; and she stood struggling, but unable to move, as sufferers feel under the influence of the nightmare. Then came slowly on her that unutterable sensation which those feel who believe themselves in the presence of an inhabitant of the other world—a sensation which almost assimilates them to the awful being on whom they gaze, in rigidity, coldness,

and immobility. The hair of her flesh stood up—every pore tingled with distinct vitality—her eyes became, to her own perception, glazed, though she retained the full power of vision; the next moment they were dilated beyond her power of closing them; the figure appeared expanding in dimensions, and advancing on her. The murmur that at first crept through her cold ears, increased to the rustling of many waters—the air became tremulous with a purple light; her abortive attempt to shriek, felt like hands grasping her throat. The paroxysm of horror suspended her faculties—her whole body contracted, and she fell senseless on the pavement.

CHAPTER VIII.

—We cannot disjoin wedlock,
 'Tis of heaven's fastening: well may we raise jars,
 Jealousies, strifes, heartburning disagreements,
 Like a thick scurf o'er life, as did our master
 Upon that patient miracle.

MIDDLETON'S *Witches*.

THE bridal of Sir Paladour de la Croix Sanglante and the Lady Isabelle, was held with a magnificence suitable to the state and wealth of the bride, and the merit and valour of the bridegroom. After the marriage ceremony, performed by the Monk of Montcalm, there was a gorgeous feast; and then the company assembled in the hall of the castle to dance, the bride and bridegroom, according to the custom of the times and of many following, being the leaders in the ball. The feudal hall presented a rude and grand consistency:—the fire supplied with vast blocks went roaring and blazing up the wide and grateless chimney; the chimney-piece, a noble work of antique art, adorned with rich sculptures in wood of men and

animals, demons and saints, fruits and foliage, heraldic emblems and sentences from Scripture, wrought with rich and fantastic luxuriance of ornament, rose like a monument to the height of thirty feet ; its stories (as they might be called), with their entablatures and flourishments, tapering as they ascended, till the topmost carving almost touched the cornice of the hall, loaded like it with heavy, fantastic, but most rich sculpturing in wood "all made out of the carver's brain." There was not, perhaps, a right angle in the walls of the apartment ; but, of its polygon figure, every pannel was either hung with rich tapestry, or framed of wood so polished and wrought, that the eye turned with delight from gold and gaudy figures, to repose on the dark hue and strong relief of the alternate compartment.

A "liveried army" of domestics, stationed in recesses, held waxen torches, whose light, like banners in a field, streamed forward or backward with the movements of the dancers and the impulse with which they swayed the air ; and those movements so stately, yet so expressive—the sweeping robes of the ladies, the gentle tread of the knights, the sonorous rustle of the long-depending garments on the inlaid floor, from which the rushes had here and there been swept, mingled with the clank of the small spurs which their partners wore even on that occasion, made meet accompaniment to the strains of the minstrels ; who leaned from their carved and gilded gallery amid the pillars of the lordly hall, to witness that luxury of motion which they participated while they inspired. And the vast uncurtained window, on whose gorgeous and emblazoned panes the admitted moon shed her full light, tinting them with purple, vermillion, and gold, and then resting in pale and placid glory on some uncoloured pane, seemed to make heaven a joyous witness of that festival : and within the deep recesses of those windows, on high-piled and costly cushions, sank beauty, panting from the delicious exercise of the dance ; while youthful

knights, "all on the wanton rushes laid them down," and pointing to the felicity of Paladour and Isabelle, did then most effectively plead for the completion of their own : while, through the low-arched doors that opened in sundry directions, was often caught, by the light of iron cressets, or the flash of torches borne by passing domestics, the sight of the menials of the household dancing in groups, to strains more homely, and with steps less graceful, but with hearts as light as any in that gay assembly.

The Lord of Courtenaye, seated in his chair of state, whispered courteous words to every lady as she passed him in the dance. The Monk of Montcalm, seated at a small trivet, furnished with a bason of holy water, with which he was to sprinkle the bridal-bed that night, was conning over his night-spells and benisons for the prosperity of the wedded pair : beside him stood the lord's falconer, with a hawk on his wrist, hooded to quell her screams ; and the Lady Isabelle's huntsman held a pair of snow-white hounds in a leash of gold tissue, brodered with names of the bride and bridegroom ; and the all-licensed fool made jests on the allusion, and shook every bell in his cap in chorus to his own drollery, and joyous burthen was borne by the laugh of all the domestics, who that night were not reprov'd for their mirth by their lord. He was engaged with other thought, for ever as he glanced towards the Monk of Montcalm he muttered,—“ thou art the master of a powerless spell : they whom I rule have foreshown thee already.”

The bride had danced one round, and was seated in her chair of state, arrayed in cloth of silver, and a transparent veil falling over her lovely brow, as if to hide her from the gaze of the throng.—“ It is she,” they said, “ for whom Sir Paladour de la Croix Sanglante challenged and overthrew Simon de Monfort—him whom fifty lances had not shaken in his saddle-seat in the lists that day. It is she for whom he undertook and accomplished the adventure against

P'Aigle sur la Roche, who never released prisoner ransomless before."—"And right worthy," cried the knights, "was she of such valour?"—"And as worthy," rejoined the ladies, "he of his reward." As they spoke, Sir Paladour, taking a torch from one of the attendants, offered his hand to the lady for another round. "I challenge this fair prisoner," said he, pressing the hand she gave, "by the golden fetters in which I bound it to-day;" and he glanced with gay triumph on the marriage ring.—"That were easy," said the smiling bride: "but, oh, thou subtle enthraller! where didst thou learn to bind the heart in such fine fetters, that it cannot choose but quit its home to dwell with thee, and delight itself to dwell in such sweet prison ever?"—"There is no shrine on earth," said the impassioned bridegroom, "worthy of gem so rich. To look on thee, to listen to thee, to touch thy hand, are several such delights, that it were worth life's dearest peril to win but one of them; but to think all these, and thyself the sum of all, are mine, wraps me in too exquisite a trance; and I fear," he added, darting on her eyes, under whose vivid and melting brilliancy her own sunk, "I fear I shall lose all consciousness of my felicity from its very excess."

At this moment a page approaching touched his mantle, and whispered some words in his ear.—"Go, boy," he said slightly, "this is no hour for such importunacy; and he led the lady as he spoke. The boy drew nearer and put a ring into his hand;—the glow that all that night had made his cheek seem like a living rose, left it in a moment as pale as that of the dead! He uttered some inarticulate sounds; and then, whispering his bride he would return on the instant, he hurried from the hall. As he crossed the threshold, he flung one unmarked look of agony in the direction where she stood, and disappeared. The lady, who had been employed in lifting and arranging her veil for the dance, heard his words, but saw not *his expression*; and, re-seating herself to await his return, began to enter into gay talk with her atten-

dants. Suddenly she paused—"Do I see between sleep and waking?" she said, bending forward, "or is that my lord? Methinks he looks wondrous wan."

Sir Paladour was seen leaning against the doorway, looking like any thing but a happy bridegroom. The gaiety of the festal was now on the decline; the cry through the hall was, "It waxes late—the torches burn to bedward." At the word, the Lord of Courtenaye rose from his chair, and six pages, arrayed in white, detached themselves from the dance, and seized torches to escort the bridegroom. This movement, though it did not disturb the dancers, caused some tumult and press around the doorway, while all waited for the train of ladies who were first to escort the bride to her apartment. Sir Paladour stood like a statue amid the bridesmen, amongst whom some pleasantries suited to those coarse but merry times were passing, when Verac exclaimed, "Hold thy torch aloft, boy! By Heaven, Sir Paladour, thy cheek is as wan as that of the dead!"—"And is no cheek here but mine pale?" said Paladour: "methinks thine is pale, too, Verac, and thine, Semonville." "The torches burn wondrous dim," said many voices: the pages trimmed them in vain. A blue pallid light diffused itself through the hall, and the flushed cheek of panting beauty paused from the dance, and the young ruddy aspects of the gazing pages were tinged with that pale and ghastly hue at the same moment; while, amid the vapour, the cressets and lamps waned in light like moons in their eclipse. The darkness increased, and the Lord of Courtenaye, however he might hail the signal, called aloud for fresh torches. The order was obeyed, but the torches they produced, lighted from those whose flame was so strangely colored, had a tint of the same pale and portentous light.

At length the hall was cleared; the only individuals left were the Lord of Courtenaye and Thibaud: *the former showed some impatience of this officious*

surveillance of his vassal—"Why art thou here?" he said.—"Because," said the vassal, "I see thine eye is fixed, and thy step pointed toward thy chamber of crime and darkness; when in such emergency didst thou say, 'why art thou here?'"—"I lack not thy counsel, nor thy aid," said his Lord: "be-gone, and trouble me not."—"Thus says a sorcerer to an imp who can no longer serve him," said Thibaud; "yet mark me, lord," and with cold hand and visage pale, he approached the Lord of Courtenaye, and grasped his shrinking shoulder—"mark me, we met in mirth and wine to confer on thy brother's murder—let that pass. I meant not thou shouldst gnash and grin like a wolf at the memory.—Let us not part in sadness: we must drain cups to deep pledges ere we part," and he filled a vast cup to the brim.—"God rid me of thee, thou insolent knave!" said his lord.—"What sayest thou, lord of Courtenaye," quoth Thibaud, reeling, but holding the cup straight, "deem'st thou I am carousing to the bridal?—No; I will name a health in which thou shalt pledge me in thy soul—if thou hast one. Here is to the consummation of thy evil purposes!" and he attempted to drain the cup in vain. "Here is," he cried faintly, holding it to his lips, "here is to the fiend and thee!" Then after a deeper draught, "Here—here is to that daughter of Satan that weds the Lord of Courtenaye to-night in the vaults of his castle, and I shall be the bridesman in flames," he repeated, draining the cup, "flames in my throat—in my brain—in my heart. Am I not thy meet bridesman, Lord of Courtenaye?" and he fell prostrate on the floor, dashing in his fall the cup far from him.

"Insensate, intoxicated brute!" said the Lord of Courtenaye, hasting from the hall, "and at such a time!" And, as he raised the tapestry which led to the passage communicating with his secret closet, the prostrate wretch, raising his inflamed visage and blood-shot eyes, like the face of a demon, once more

exclaimed, "flames—flames—in throat and brain; but not in soul like thee, false, fiendish lord!"

The Lord of Courtenaye stayed not to listen to his ravings: he hastened to his secret chamber, in the spirit of him who said, "Evil, be thou my good." The terrible implements of the vault had all been removed thither; there was the necromantic altar-block of stone, supporting a seething caldron, the triangular stone of black marble, on whose dark and polished surface a light gleamed and disappeared successively, as the flame of the caldron blazed and sank—that flame was of the deepest blue; there was no light in the chamber or closet, but that which issued from the caldron.

The light thus singularly diffused, fell on as singular a group. Three female forms, withered, haggard, and decrepid, were gathered round it. They were the same who had before been assembled in the vault. One of them, kneeling, held open a parchment volume, on which characters were inscribed in red and black alternately. Right opposite, another hag was seated on her hams, her elbows resting on her knees, and her withered knuckles locked in her jaws, while her livid eyes and visage were now partially and ghastly seen by the light of the caldron, and then, as the gleam subsided, lost in darkness. The third, crouching close to the caldron, flung in some ingredients, and zealously pursued her task of stirring the mixture. She was placed in such a position with regard to the light, that her figure was indefinable—her action only visible, as her dark arm crossed the flame from time to time.

"And, thinkest thou," said she who pored over the parchment leaves—"thinkest thou she will fulfil her promise to-night? and that she will show to him that which she hath promised?"—"Doubt it not," said the other, without unlocking her contact of jaw and knuckle. "Did she not bring us first acquainted with the evil one? And if all be true, the Lord of Courtenaye is meetest mate for him than we."—"It

glads me," said the inferior agent, who stirred the caldron, "to see our mistress when she is wrought by the passions of others, being passionless herself, to do or to promise that which passes earthly power. Then I feel she has a look that may command the fiend—I feel that my master may be my slave, if I had eye and voice and step like—Oh, she is awful in her moment of power!"—"Awful she is," said the other, "but awful though she be, she favours much one whom I remember fair in her youth. I was fair myself—men told me so; but age, and want, and the wish of revenge without the power, have brought me to what I am."—"But who was she?" said her hearers eagerly.—"Put in more night-shade and wolfsbane, and see that the flame wane not."—"Tell us whom doth our mistress resemble?"—"Even Marie de Mortemar," said the crone.—"And who was she?" said the reader of the parchment, dropping the scroll.—"She was a noble, beautiful lady, heiress of Mortemar; and methinks even yet our pale mistress hath her falcon eye, her glorious port, her thrilling voice; but it fared ill with her.—She was a heretic; and worse, she would be a preacher—a prophetess—she would be the *Virgin* of the Albigenses. Her touch healed the sick—her prayer suspended the avalanche in its fall—her word raised the dead. She was one, as I have heard, who could make a heaven, herself being sole goddess; or turn that heaven to hell. But lo, in the height of her spiritual pride, there came against her Count Raymond, then sworn brother to the Lord of Courtenaye, the brother of him whose hests we do, and the Bishop of Toulouse, and they despoiled her of lands and power, and burnt her castles, and made of her people serfs, and misused her in such sort, that she wandered a maniac for a time, and then was heard of no more."—"And fate too good for her," said she who stirred the caldron. "Was she not a heretic? I thank kind stars," she muttered, pursuing her task—"I thank kind stars, for holier name must not be uttered here,

that, witch as I am, I never was heretic, else may these flames I am stirring consume me.”—“And how,” said the mocking hag who spoke last,—“how deemest thou thy lot better, being a witch?”—“Because,” said the other, in the dreaming darkness of her intoxicated existence, “I know not well whether I be witch or no. I am as one between the living world and that which lives not.—Sometimes I think all a dream, and other time I think all reality, and often I know not what to think. I was promised wealth, and power, and youth, yet am I poor, and powerless, and withered. I banquet at gay feasts, and wake famished. I see stores of gold, and do the drudgery of a devil for a liard.”

“Hast thou had no hours of dark power and fearful pleasure, when we have drained the cup our mistress deals to us, and anointed us with that ointment she mixes?” said her companion, trying to fortify her own incredulity by the extorted confession of the other. “Have we not had brave nights, high visions, rare pleasures? Was it a dream that night when we danced round the tree, where hung the bodies of the vassals of the Lord of Courtenaye, whom he slew in his mood for saying that he knew better how to feast the Crusaders, than to lead them; and ever as we danced we rent a rag or gnawed a muscle till they descended and joined us, the fetters clanking round the fleshless bones making meet time to our measure? Who our dark minstrel was, thou sawest thyself.”

“And what was that,” said the other, in fiendish emulation—“what was that to the night we feasted in the ruined church interdicted for murder long since done, and in which the children of the Count of Toulouse sought sanctuary in vain? I, for thou wast not there, dug with these nails the body of a span-long unchristened brat from the grave where the mother, a leman of the Bishop of Toulouse, had smothered it in earth. Flags of the aisle were our table, and strange were the dainties heaped on them; but that which pleased our master beat was

the——Hush! let us stir the caldron: the flame waxeth pale, and it must be the hue of the rose, ere the charm be perfect. Hark!" she exclaimed, "hark!" and "hark again!" was repeated by her companions, as a sound of unutterable horror ascended from the floor on which they stood. "Is it our master?" said the hags, crouching close to each other. "Who are ye?" said a feeble voice,—“who are ye, the sound of whose voices I hear above me?”—“We are the daughters of evil!” said the elder hag, “met to do our father’s will.”—“And fitter spot ye might not choose,” said the voice; “but if ye be human, list to me, though ye may not aid me.”—“And who art thou that criest on us so?” said the hags, bending their ears to the floor.—“I am Vidal the minstrel!” said a feeble voice: “I have been plunged by the craft and crime of the Lord of Courtenaye in this dungeon, because my memory bore traces that are now effaced. Here have they held me in misery; but they fed me at least till within the last two days. From thence I have not tasted food, and that I should lightly regard; all I crave is one draught of water! water! and I die content.” The hags, from the deepest experience of human wretchedness, combined with the most craving excitement of the imagination, were as unmoved by the horrors they heard as by those they were about to prepare, and they would have mocked the gasping petitioner, had not one appeared among them, who in a moment chained up every tongue in terror.

It was the Lord of Courtenaye, who entering the closet locked the door behind him, and then fiercely turning to the group demanded—“Where is *she*?”—“She will be here anon,” answered the beldames; “and meanwhile we lack no implements for our task.”—“To it, then, and suddenly, and successfully,” said the Lord of Courtenaye: “or ye shall welter and roar in the caldron ye are lighting! To your gear and quickly, ye hags. So sure as I fling down this key from my hand,” and he dropped it into the

seething caldron, "so surely shall ye never quit your task till it be fulfilled."—"She will be here anon—doubt it not," said the terrified hags.—"I neither doubt nor believe, nor think nor feel," said the furious lord: "on with your task! The night wanes, and the fiery arrow is already drawn to the head—the heavens are dark—the astrologer reads the stars no more. What light I may now catch must flash on me from the abysses of that downward world, of whose entrance ye are meet portresses." Two of the wretched women then linked themselves hand in hand, while the third recited aloud from her parchment. As they hopped and hobbled their witch-dance round the caldron, one of them repeated incessantly, *hurr, hurr, hurr, harr, hus, hus*; at every sound striking her staff stronger on the floor, while her voice rose to a shriek, and the other uttered the imagined potent sounds *Dies, dies jesquet benedofet, douvima, enitemaus*. The arch-witch, meanwhile stirred the caldron, and read fast and loud from that bloody scroll.* Suddenly the blaze of the caldron tapered upward, gleamed, and expired. "By hell!" said the Lord of Courtenaye, "ye mock me with some device." The hags wearily pursued their magic dance, and the caldron blazed again. "Of what hue must the flame be," said the Lord of Courtenaye, "ere her promise be fulfilled?"—"The hue of the blood-red wine, or of the warrior's heart-drops," answered the witches.—"And know ye not, hags, a spell to make the flame change its hue from that pale infernal blue to crimson? Hark ye! raise the flame to its right and ruddy hue, or by hell I will stir the caldron with your withered carcasses!"

The terrified hags renewed their "toil and trouble:" and the fierce and fiend-like visage of the Lord of Courtenaye was bent more eagerly on the blaze. The hags crouched breathless beside it. "I have got an ingredient of power," said one of them; "but

* Vide Delrio, Wierus, Glanville, or Ben Jonson's very poetical mask of Queens.

our mistress charged me not to use it, save in her presence."—"Use it now," said the Lord of Courtenaye, "plunge it in, or thou thyself shalt plunge in that caldron!" Thus urged, the wretched woman flung the ingredient with which the mistress of the spell had furnished her into the caldron. It was a chemical preparation of singular power. The moment it was dropped into the caldron, the flame sank and all was darkness for a moment. The next it blazed up to the height of the ceiling, caught fierce and instant hold of the rafters, and next of the cloth with which the apartment was hung. And in a few moments every compartment of the chamber was on flame, and the light of the caldron extinguished in that of blazing roof, tapestry, and furniture.

The first effort of the Lord of Courtenaye was to recover the key which in his passion he had flung into the caldron. But its contents were boiling like molten lead, and with a shriek of agony he withdrew his arm. His next was to call on his wretched associates to assist in extinguishing the flames; but all the materials were combustible, and their threadbare rags, which they tore off to stifle the flames, burned like tinder in a moment. His last impulse was to rush to the door, and thunder at it with hand and foot, uttering all the time yells of fierce and fearful agony. The chamber was remote from the haunt of domestics. He redoubled his cries: but, meanwhile, the flames had increased, the tapestry was consumed, the roof was in a flame over their heads, and blazing fragments began to drop on the floor. The cloth that hung before the warrior's portrait, consumed to ashes, crumbled away, and the figure painted on copper, and resisting the force of the flames, stood out strongly in the horrid light, as if a living and present being glared on the fearful doom of his foe.

At this moment, the wretched hags, maddened by the increasing flames, yet retaining some witch-like associations, excited by the crimson blaze, began

once more their ghastly reel about the caldron, whose overboiling flames caught their garments in a moment. They blazed yet still they staggered in that wild dance, and shrieked their spells as the fire reached their flesh. Then all at once they seized hold of the Lord of Courtenaye. Loud as his cries were, they were drowned by louder cries without. A hundred voices shouted—"Where is the Lord of Courtenaye?—Where?" and a hundred footsteps were heard above in the stoned-paved galleries.—"Here—here!" said their lord, whose horror of his dreadful death overcame his fear of being discovered with such associates in such employment. "I burn—I burn;—unless aid be given presently. The key is lost—use axe and crow—break ope the door—break ope the door!" he cried, turning his feeble fingers round the massive lock.

"Then mischief hath done its masterpiece, and it is hell's very holiday!" exclaimed a voice without. "The lady Isabelle lies slaughtered in the bridal-bed; and none can trace the assassin!"—"What tellest thou me of the Lady Isabelle!" said the Lord of Courtenaye:—"I tell thee, slave, I burn!" The volumes of smoke now came bursting from beneath the door, and through the apertures of the walls. In a moment crows and axes, and all the implements for forcing a way, were thundering against the door; while another party, ascending by a stair the landing place of which was on the roof of that closet, tore it up, with pick-axe and all implements at hand; and others toiled to drag up the stair vessels of water to pour on the flame. The din was horrible; the dying screams of the hags, two of whom were suffocated by the flames, the last dancing and blazing in a paroxysm of fury-like inebriation, till she fell—the cries of the Lord of Courtenaye, who held fast hold of the door, shrieking at every blow dealt on it—the clash and batter on the roof of the chamber—the roar of the suppressed flames—the clamour of attendants, made the scene almost infernal. It

was in vain the strength of the massive barrier of the iron-plated door; now after was heard a yell. Above the soil was heard a successful : the doors were rent asunder, the waters but now came in water poured on the flames. And, reaching through the fractures of the ceiling, they heard their own claim, "Oh for one drop of the water that I have denied the thirsty monarch at my castle-gate — one drop!" — "One drop," cried a voice which none heard but he. The same exclamation was uttered, and at the same moment, in the fort of the castle and the victim of the danger. At that moment the floor gave way and with crashing and dazing into the vault below. "Fling overboard, since the door will not yield," cried a hundred voices, as the shrieking lord clung to the posts of the door, the scorching fragments of the floor being his only standing-place. "Come heaven or hell," said Thibaud, whom frantic intoxication bent over the shattered roof among the rest, "the Lord of Courtenaye shall not perish alone: be his doom what it will, I will partake it." And, spite of the resistance, he dashed himself from the crater, as it might be termed, into the gulph below. The impulse of his fall shattered and bore down the single plank on which the Lord of Courtenaye stood. They plunged together amid smoke and flame; but amid both arose another form, whose yell and grasp, hideousness and fierceness, justified the terrible construction put on its appearance. Out with thy beads, Monk of Montcalm," cried all: "save—save him if thou canst! The fiend hath risen in flames to seize him!—how he grapples!—how he writhes!—how he gnashes!—the fiend is stronger! Holy Mary!—Did ever human eyes see such sight!—The fiend hath him—he plunges him into the flames.—Tell thy beads faster, monk. Holy monk, save his soul, if not his body!—He rises—he shrieks—he sinks—he is lost!" all exclaimed, as the Lord of Courtenaye disappeared, sinking into that vault of flame and darkness with

the ghastly shape that seized him. It was indeed Vidal, the prisoner of the dungeon, who, in the agonies of his dying vengeance, as the roof of his prison fell in, had seized on his tyrant lord, and dragged him down into the flames, amid which he was himself choking and expiring.

The smouldering ruins of the magic chamber fell fast into that gulph of flame. All present averted their eyes at the sight, and prayed in terror or in deprecation. A single voice thundered through that awful silence: it exclaimed, "When have my predictions failed? Said I not unto thee *thou shouldest meet my Master and thine this night?*" Those who heard had scarce time to catch the sound, or distinguish the form of the speaker; for many footsteps approached, and voices were heard to exclaim—"Foul witchery hath been wrought this night! The body of the Lady Isabelle hath disappeared; the traces of blood are in the chamber, but nowhere can her corse be found. Close all the doors, let every knight in the castle draw his brand, and look that the murderer escape not."

CHAPTER IX.

But their way
Lies through the perplex'd paths of this drear wood.
MILTON'S *Comus*.

THE Monk of Montcalm had set out on his return to Beaucaire, after doing his errand at the convent of the Paraclete. The danger to be apprehended from the wolves, which infested the forest that lay in his nearest way, induced him to adopt another and more circuitous route. While pursuing it, evening came on—a grey and misty twilight veiled every object. The way lay through a rocky road that

wound among mountains, or rather stony hills, bleak and bare. Not a sound broke on the stillness, save the echo of the solitary passenger's steps from the hollows of the hill, and the screams of the birds, which, after a few short circles in the grey and cloudy air, flew back to their retreat among the cliffs.

As the evening or rather night advanced, the clouds dispersed, and the scene around became less dreary. The path opened on a plain apparently boundless; it was covered with a soft thick sward, of which the elastic resistance to the tread made the footing delightful: the wide dome of the horizon was its only limit; the bright stars "came up above the head" of the traveller, and there was just that dubious interval between light and darkness, that, though shadowy and indistinct, cannot be termed gloomy. So profound was the silence, too, that the monk could distinctly hear his own footsteps; there was no other sound, save the whistle of the shepherds shooting across the heath, or a few notes of those simple airs by which they amused the loneliness of their pastoral life, and which, heard thus at night, (the singer too invisible,) had an expression of plaintive and soothing sweetness which they must have wanted by day: they had the effect not only of cheering the path, but the spirits, of the good monk. "Perchance," he said, "those sounds, so simple and yet sweet, may be caught by a more skilful ear than mine; and, when adorned with courtly words, and set off by some curious instrument, may yet be heard with delight in the palaces of princes.* And thus too, perhaps," he added, "the sounds that these poor Albigeois have presumed to strike on the mysterious chords of inspiration, when modulated by a truer ear and a finer touch, may be caught by futurity, and one day make music in the ear of hea-

* This idea was suggested to the writer on hearing the beautiful Irish air of Aileen Aroon, composed probably by some poor illiterate minstrel, (though tradition says otherwise,) sung in a crowded theatre by Madame Catalani.

ven." The plain now terminated in one of those thickets through he had to make his way, to avoid the dangers of the forest. Here, struggling through the tangled and intricate brakes, the only point of direction discoverable was a small eminence, surmounted by what, on reaching it, he discovered to be a cross of stone. He gained it, and tried to send his feeble sight far into the night. The lights that long ere this should have glimmered from the town of Beaucaire, were not visible; the humble spires of Paraclete had ceased to be so long ere twilight; and, where the sky glowed with the blaze of its brightest constellations, their lights burned in the direction of the far-distant towers of Courtenaye, so late the seat of beauty, valour, and festivity; now dark, deserted, and suggesting only images of fearful and mysterious calamity.

At this moment he saw a light at a small distance, slowly but distinctly approaching him. It paused, and then he thought he could distinguish a group of figures; but all was dim, shadowy, and uncertain. The Monk of Montcalm, however, sure that human beings were near, hasted from the eminence to implore their assistance; but, at the first sound of his voice, the light was extinguished and the figures became totally invisible. He struggled on—he thought he heard the low moanings of one in pain, but suppressing his cries; and, as he attempted to feel his way with extended hands, something like a human hand touched his; but the touch was so cold, that the monk withdrew his from the contact, shuddering as he did so with invincible horror. The encounter seemed, however, to brace his nerves; for, after having, with dizzy head and unconscious step, forced his way, as he imagined, but a few paces onward, he found himself on a spot which must have been a furlong from his last position. Here the brushwood was cleared away—a few dwarf trees only intercepted the view: but these stood lone and almost ghastly—waving their boughs in the night-breeze like the

arms of skeletons ; their pale bark and doddered trunks making themselves visible in the dim light.

Amid this scene, cheerless, if not desolate, on a bare platform, stood a tower, large, square, and low. Around this lonely tower were the fragments of a shattered wall, amid whose angles (for it was very irregularly built) were the remains of some ruinous outbuildings. The monk paused and looked round him : terror was his first impulse ; but his weariness, both mental and bodily, prevailed, and he was compelled to seat himself on a fragment of the ruined wall, while he trembled at the shelter he sought. It was the tower of Hugo, or Hugues,* in whose vicinity the boldest in that country dreaded to be after sunset. The monk was not without his share of the superstition of the age ; but the purity of his conscience was a balance to the errors of his creed ; and he looked on the tower, and thought of its terrible inhabitant, with fear indeed, but unmixed with a sense of danger.

As he looked upwards on the huge pile, dimly defined on the troubled sky, a small postern, that lay concealed in the darkness, was cautiously opened, and two figures issuing from it, approached him. They spoke, but their conversation was in whispers, and he could distinguish only one sentence : " It is done ! and were the guerdon doubled, I would not undertake such task again." They passed on ; and, dreary as the speech had been, the monk felt it was still drearier to listen to their departing tread, and watch their figures as they diminished in the darkness.

At this moment a light was distinctly seen gleaming in a loop-hole of the tower ; and though this was,

* Ugo, or Hugues, was a baron of Languedoc, who favoured the Albigeois, and from whom the French protestants of a later period derived the name of Huguenots. The superstition of the age represented him as a necromancer, who, after death, continued to haunt the castle and its neighbourhood with a band of *infernal associates*.

in the monk's opinion, a very equivocal sign that the inmates of the tower were beings of his own species, he continued to watch with that vague hope that light always suggests in a situation so lonely, till he saw it glimmer through a narrow slit that seemed on a level with the postern. If the hand that bears that light be human, thought the monk, rising with difficulty, it will not close the door against me at such an hour. And he struck on it with his staff.—In a few moments it was opened slowly, and a figure appeared at it, bearing a light in its hand. It was tall, and enveloped so completely in dark garments, that neither form, sex, nor age was distinguishable. The eyes alone were visible; and, though they were bright and large, there was an expression in them that was not calculated to diminish the feeling its singular appearance created. The monk (in a tone that he could not prevent from faltering) told his distress as a benighted traveller, and entreating permission to enter, almost wishing now it might be denied. The figure appeared to be examining him closely: at length it replied, "Enter, if thou wilt." But these words, pronounced in a voice by which it was still impossible to judge of the speaker's sex, seemed, by the manner in which they were uttered, to imply "Enter, if you dare." The monk, anxious for something like a parley with his strange host, asked if he might be permitted to sleep that night beneath the roof. "Sleep," answered the figure in the same tone, "if thou canst." It closed the door as the monk entered, and, turning, led the way up a winding staircase of stone, rudely constructed, and much dilapidated. After ascending a few steps, it led the way through an arch of stone, without a door, into a large chamber; into the centre of which it advanced, and then stood in silence.

The monk looked round him. The apartment was rude, wild, and desolate; without furniture, and apparently without other inhabitant. The walls were of unhewn stone, and, with the arched ceiling, were

blackened by time and smoke. In the huge fireplace some embers were still burning on the hearth, shedding on the wide arch above and the rugged walls

——“A melancholy light,
The gloom of glowing embers.”*

On one side was a kind of rude wooden couch, on which were spread some dark vestments; on the other side a heap of the same seemed huddled in a dark nook; on the hearth was placed a large caldron. These objects were scarce discoverable by the dim light the figure held, but were disclosed from time to time by the red and fitful glow of the fire.—The monk had time to notice these objects, for the figure had not yet spoken, but remained standing in the centre of the room. At length, pressing its hand on its brow, as if with an effort at recollection, it muttered, “Yes, he lacks food.” Then turning to the monk—“Thou art with one who, unconscious of human wants, sometimes forgets that the children of the dust possess not such exemption.” And, pointing to the monk to sit down on a bench of stone, it offered him some fragments of bread and a cup of water.—The monk declined the food, but drank the water, first fortifying himself with an internal ejaculatory prayer. “Perhaps thou art dainty: I have nought else to offer.”—“It is my wonted—in truth, mine only fare,” replied the monk; “but I am weary and o’erworn, and would willingly sleep.” The figure silently pointed to a nook in which some straw was spread, and then quitted the apartment, bearing the light with it; while the monk, after praying with more than usual fervency, tried to betake himself to rest. The glare of the fire for a long time prevented him from closing his eyes; and, when at length he did so, and was sinking into rest, he was roused by a groan, not loud, but perfectly audible, issuing evidently from some one in the chamber. He half rose

* Lee’s *Edipus*.

on his elbow, and looked round him : it was not repeated, and he tried to compose himself again. But he had scarcely done so, when a second groan was heard nearer him, as if the person who uttered it was approaching.

Giving up all farther thoughts of rest, the monk now began telling his beads earnestly. But, while thus occupied, his eyes involuntarily closed from weariness ; and he then thought he perceived the light, that had hitherto shone so strongly through the chamber, suddenly obscured, so as to be perceptible to his sight, though his eyes were closed. Once more he raised himself, and then saw distinctly a dark figure standing between him and the fire. Its back was turned to him ; but the form was visible, and strongly defined on the light. After a few moments, it glided away, and was lost in the obscurity of the chamber.

The monk now arose, and tremblingly but solemnly adjured the vision, whether a living mortal or a disembodied spirit, to appear and reveal the cause of its restlessness and its wailings. There was no answer, but, as he advanced farther into the apartment, it appeared to him that the heap of vestments spread on the couch, which he had before observed, moved slightly. "This light deceives mine eyes, perchance," he said ; "yet surely those garments seem so disposed as if a human body lay beneath them." The folds heaved palpably as he spoke. With the preternatural courage of fear, he raised part of the drapery, and saw with horror, beneath, the naked bosom of a man, from a wound in whose side the blood was still flowing. He had not strength to look at the face ; he staggered some paces back, and leaned against the wall for support. At this moment the sound of steps slowly roused him, and the figure he had before beheld again entered the chamber, bearing something in its arms.

The monk did not venture to quit the spot : he stood contracting his figure and suppressing his

breath, while he watched its movements. After some uncertain gestures and vague glances round the chamber, it crouched at length before the fire, and, unfolding the burthen it held in its arms, began to drop slowly and singly its contents into the caldron. These appeared to be herbs; but there were other ingredients; and at length he perceived relics of mortality, bones and parts of a human body, mingling in the mixture. He could no longer doubt the purpose and employment of the figure: and, trembling, lest he should become in some degree a partaker of the crime by continuing to witness it, he hastened from his concealment, and called aloud on the figure to forbear. She rose, and, turning hastily towards him, dropped the mantle which enfolded her head, and disclosed the features of a face, which, but once beheld, had been forgotten never.—

“He had awaken’d at night,
With the dream of those ghastly eyes.”*

His first impulse was to gaze on them for a moment with unmingled horror; his next, to fly from the place. “Stay me not,” he cried, as she appeared attempting to detain him: “withhold me not; I know thee who thou art! Not a word, not a breath, will I exchange with thee: I know thee who thou art!”—“Know me!” she replied, in a voice in which scorn seemed to be mingled with incredulity.—“I know all!” he exclaimed; “I know thee, thy crime, and thy despair: crime that forbids mercy; despair that shuts out hope.”—“Thy words—thy voice,” she said, “are like those dreams that sometimes cross the dark sleep of my existence. Now the recollection rises dimly on me like a vision. Dost thou remember the lonely lake, and her who rowed the dark skiff? It was a strange meeting that—marked by doubtful question and fearful answer.” “Would I did not remember!” replied the monk, crossing himself. And he recalled that night alluded to in the

* Southey’s *Thalaba*.

commencement of our tale, when he had encountered this female, previously to her meeting with Sir Paladour, and after having done deep penance for the involuntary crime of listening to her dreadful secret. "Yet stay," she said, detaining him while she seemed searching her scattered recollections, "yet stay, there is a task to be done, in which thou wilt not scorn to join even with me: there is one whose wound is deep and deadly, and thou must aid me to heal it."—"Wretched woman," cried the monk, who believed she spoke of herself, "for such wound as thine there is no balm, no leech, or healing in mortal power."—"And deemest thou it was of a spirit's immortal wounds I spoke?" she said, "or sought aid or cure for them from *thee*? Then were my folly beyond even my crime. No—it was of another I spake, and, light as I hold thine aid, or that of man, the credulity (which thou wouldst call faith) of the sufferer demands the charm of prayer muttered over the ingredients I am preparing for his cure: it may not else be wrought."—"And darest thou," said the monk, shrinking with horror from the proposal, "darest thou imagine that I would blend the worship of Heaven with the rites of Hell, and mix the breath of profaned and polluted prayer with the steam that issues from that caldron of abomination? If I pray for thy victim, I pray alone."—"My victim!" cried the female, with fierce derision. "Ye are the victims of your own lusts, madness, and crime—victims of our own preparation. And then ye dare to accuse the stars—the elements—the hurtless operation of inanimate things. Yea, in your insane impotence, ye accuse that Heaven that renounces and hates ye! My victim!" she repeated; "when was man a victim, but by his own agency?"—"I heed not thy ravings," replied the monk, divested of all terror: "if good is to be wrought, tell me how, or on whom; but it never can be in conjunction with thee!"

A deep groan seemed to echo his words; and

now fully aroused and emboldened, the monk turned to observe whence it issued. That smaller heap of coiled up garments, which he had noticed before, seemed to stir, and a sound was heard from beneath it, that resembled respiration painfully suppressed. He made a movement to approach it. "Hold!" cried the female, seizing his arm, "disturb not the slumberer: Sleep is the image of death. When have mortals rest, but in sleep, or in the grave?"—"Talk not to me," said the monk,—“here hath been evil done—a corse lies in this chamber. I tell thee, wretched woman—if woman thou art—weak as I am, I will not quit this spot, till I know what body lies beneath that bloody and unblest covering.”—"It is a wounded knight," she said; "and I have brought him hither that I may heal him."—"And is it with such ingredients the cure is to be wrought? What are the foul contents of yonder caldron?"—"Thou knowest not what is mingling in that potent mixture," she replied, bending her eye on it. "There be hope and anguish, crime and fear; tears wept from the heart, and mingled with its blood; maidens' young vows, and true men's broken hearts."—"A-roint thee, foul witch!" cried the monk, "*adjuro te in nomine!*"—"Peace with thy powerless jargon," she interrupted; "the adder's ear is not deaf to it than mine. Speak! wilt thou utter a prayer over what I have prepared and provided here? For myself I ask thee none: those who have nothing to hope, have also nothing to fear."—"Blaspheme not, wretched woman! Holy Heaven, is it possible that aught that once bore thine image can be so utterly fallen!"—"Fallen!" she repeated in an altered tone; "yes, truly thou sayest fallen;—it is not that time has bowed my form, that disease has ravaged my frame, that anguish has withered my heart: this is not to be fallen;—it is when God hath departed from the soul where he dwelt; when the cherubim withdraw their plumes from the mercy-seat; when the desecrated temple becomes the den of fiends, the

THE ALBIGENSES.

abode of hatred and vengeance! *That, that is to be fallen, and that am I!"*

Moved by her words, the monk was attempting to frame his voice into a tone of compassion; when, the tide of her feelings suddenly recoiling, she burst into a strain of imprecation so vehement, continuous, and dreadful, that the holy man, believing himself in truth in the presence of an evil spirit, and losing all other fears in the thought, rushed from the spot in horror: nor was it till he was at some distance from the tower, that he could collect his thoughts, and endeavour, by urgent prayer, to banish the recollection of the horrible sounds with which his ears still seemed ringing.

CHAPTER X.

When, lo! a train profusely gay
Comes pranking o'er the place.

PARNELL.

THE beams of the morning sun rising in a cloudless sky, and gleaming on the glittering frost-work of a wintry but smiling landscape; the crisped earth; the narrowed brook, with its line of blue waters gliding between two banks of crystal; the cold but reviving and bracing air; the twittering of the birds, waking in their wintry nests amid the leafless branches; and the merry bells ringing in the town of Beaucaire, whose spires towered and sparkled in the far blue horizon—came welcomely and refreshingly to the senses of the poor monk, as the morning broke on his advancing progress. The fearful night had passed, and he felt its dark images disappear before the cheering and invigorating influence of that kindest if not loveliest of mornings—the bright healthful morning of a genial winter-day.

He wound his way through the thicket, and, after one involuntary reverted glance towards the dark tower of Ugo, was entering on the plain, when, from an opposite hill, a gay and splendid train appeared descending, and the contrast between them and the fearful forms of the past night, made them appear like some bright group from fairy-land.

A gallant array of knights and men-at-arms, well accoutred and mounted, rode round a lady, sumptuously attired, and appearing the mistress of the train: the bells round the necks of the knights' horses, and the bugles of their attendants, making a merry melody as they rode. Behind them followed a smaller train; and as they reached the foot of the hill the van halted, and the knights, reining up their steeds on each side, left a space in the centre, where the lady sat on her palfrey alone. The party in the rear then advanced, and a young female, alighting from her horse, knelt to the lady, and attempted to kiss her hand, while the other, bending from her saddle, embraced her. A short delay occurred, as a brief and hurried farewell seemed to pass between the two parties. The former gathering round the lady in the splendid garb, and pushing their horses to speed as they parted in one direction; while a single knight, with about a dozen men-at-arms, appeared to act as the guide and conductor of the other female, who had now remounted her horse, and rode rapidly in the opposite direction. The parties seemed to separate with every token of regard, the knights saluting by lowering their bannered lances and bending their plumed heads, and the females by waving the ends of their embroidered veils, and kissing their hands till they could behold each other no longer.

The former party consisted of queen Ingelberg, who with De Vaugelas and Limosin, was pursuing her way to Paris; the latter, of Sir Amirald and his train, who, by the queen's order, and at her own wish, was conducting Genevieve to Toulouse.

On that spot they had parted; but not before a

change, at which she trembled, had taken place in Genevieve's heart and mind. She had rode some days in peace and security with queen Ingelberg's party. Caressed by the grateful queen, honoured by her courtly attendants, and, most dangerous of all, loved by one, for whose love she would have forsaken all but her faith : in this short interval of tranquillity, the only one her stormy existence had ever known, characters had been developed without the strong exigency of circumstances, and feelings expressed, that seemed the birth of the heart and the habit, not of the moment.—What noble feeling!—what lofty thought!—what deep self-devotedness!—what graceful courtesy had not the knights displayed ; and queen Ingelberg, who owed her superiority evidently more to her rank than to her intellectual eminence, how grateful was she ! and how resistless

In all the graceful gratitude of power !*

And their manner—their voices—their language—their whole existence, seemed modulated on a scale of noble harmony. All that was lofty—all that was refined in life, seemed to be concentrated in the self-devoted valour of the men—the stately and gentle courtesy of the women. And these were the beings who had been represented to her from infancy as demons of pride, rapacity, and brutality ; and Amiral, too, the beautiful, the brave, the gentle, was he indeed the enemy of Heaven?—She began to doubt her creed ; then trembling at her own aberrations, forced herself to cast a look on her future life—it was one of poverty and toil ; for she had sacredly determined to appropriate the value of the jewels she had received from the queen to the relief of her suffering people, and to maintain herself by her own labours ; and her late existence, caressed by royalty and flattered by love, was to be a dream—And let it be a dream ! she sighed, with a strong effort of im-

* Lalla Rookh.

ternal resolution : she struggled hard with her heart, and strove to fix her eye steadily on her future prospects, dreary as they were.

“ Would I had never known them,” she said ; meaning only *him* when she said *them* ; for the creed, the home, and the habits of her fathers seemed dark to her mental eye as she forced it to dwell on them : and she tried to expiate the involuntary crime by an internal resolve never to suffer gratitude, admiration, or another feeling (which she would not name but could not disavow) to interfere with the claims of her conscience ;—the duties, the exigencies, the necessities, (and she often repeated the word,) the necessities of her own destination. Perhaps she was not aware that this resolution was made while her face was averted from that of Sir Amirald, for the next moment, when she beheld those features glowing with youth, beauty, and passion, she again felt her heart palpitate and her mind wander. She could not, however, decline conversing with her guide and protector, though she knew that the topic of his discourse would put her resolution to the test ; and she prepared to listen with averted face and a rigid determination of self-watchfulness and self-possession.

The conversation was long, earnest, and animated on the part of Amirald : its tenor may be conjectured from the only reply of Genevieve’s that was audible, —“ No, Sir Knight, never !—Sir Knight, never—the destiny of a noble youth must not be thwarted and debased by a lot so lowly and hapless.—Go on, noble knight, in the career to which thy fate calls thee, and honour and fortune sit on thy lance, save when it is levelled against the helpless and the harmless ! Forget me, save when thou meetest one of my people ; and then think on me and spare him. Some fair and noble maiden—” but she could not finish this part of the picture ; and so, having uttered her resolution with what strength she might, she said to herself, “ Now my heart is at peace—yes, I am at

peace ;" and dropping her veil, wept in silent agony within its folds.

But here she was mistaken : endless opportunities occurred during their journey, and Amirald was not a youth likely to lose his suit for lack of importunity ; besides, pleading has a thousand tones, and refusal but one ; and Genevieve grew wearied and ashamed of the poverty and monotony of her sole reply to the endlessly varied and increasingly eloquent pleadings of her lover : nature, too, seemed to take part against her in their progress ; for the spot where they halted to partake of their noon-day meal, seemed formed to soften the heart : it was one of those spots that winter seems delighted to spare—a grassy path kept fresh and verdurous by overhanging evergreens, terminated in a rocky inclosure, whose acclivities were feathered to their very summits with every tree and shrub that could yet boast a leafy spray or a tint of green. A narrow stream fell in sheets of foam from the highest rocks, and rested in a basin, where its transparent dark-brown water gave back, as it reposed, the image of every rock and grassy tuft and pendent spray that overhung it : around, the rocks were hollowed into cavities, rich with mosses of every hue, and the fantastic clusters of creeping plants :—their rude forms, sequestered look, and the mystical and shifting light that played over them, as the sun gleamed on the water, or the wind waved the boughs, suggesting the image—

*Intus aquæ dulces, vivoque sedilia saxo,
Nympharum domus.**

It was here the travellers rested, and seating themselves on the grass, partook of their repast, and slaked their thirst at the stream as it fell. "Thou art resolved, then, that I must be of noble birth," said Amirald, renewing the topic of their conversation as soon as he could : "Alas ! sweet Genevieve,

* Virgil.

I am the child of mystery—a foundling, exposed beneath the walls of the castle of Courtenaye, and reared on the surly charity of its lord. I never knew but one, whose destiny, he told me, bore aught of similitude to mine—that darkly-fated knight de la Croix Sanglante.”

Genevieve trembled at the name. “Alas!” cried Amiral, his eyes fast falling with tears at the recollection; “alas! for the noble knight!—the love of brothers was but a faint image of mine for thee, Paladour. A braver knight never laid lance in rest; a truer never pledged faith to a brother-in-arms; a goodlier never wooed lady in her bower. Woe is me for thee, Paladour! But what a fearful cloud overshadowed thy setting!”—“Fearful indeed,” Genevieve murmured, shuddering as she remembered the night of the apparition in the convent of the Paraclete.

“Methinks,” said Amiral, half reclining on his cloak, which he had spread on the grass, and letting his blue eye fall negligently on the lovely scene around him,—“methinks, when I recall the disastrous fate of the brave and lovely, when I think of Paladour and the lady Isabelle, the world, and all it contains, grow dim to my view. I wonder not that men have fled from it to these sweet and solitary places. Methinks I could now cut off mine hair;” and he displayed, not unconsciously, its glossy and redundant clusters; “change my lance for a staff, my chain for a rosary, mine helmet for a cowl, and dwell in yonder cave, a hooded eremite.—No, not an eremite—I would be a peasant—a wool-clad peasant; and thou, sweet Genevieve, by my side, while heart and hovel alike were brightened by the light of thy smile.”

Genevieve struggled hard to wrest her mind from the contemplation of the picture; but it would not do: her natural love for rural scenery and rural habits, took part with her heart; and she thought she was but advocating her own simple tastes, while *she was unconsciously pleading the cause of a differ-*

ent and a more dangerous client. She spoke of the spot with an enthusiasm she had never felt before, and there was not an object around, from the blue mountains in the distance, to the redbreast that alit with its slender feet on the turf, to pick the crumbs of their meal, that she did not try to paint to his attention, with all her simple skill, till she discovered that the eyes of Amirald were fixed not on her, but on a superb eagle that was soaring right above their heads, and appeared stationary at the proud height he had towered to. "That is a gallant bird," he exclaimed, screening his dazzled eyes with his hand; "oh, who would hop and peck, a red-breast in the shade, when he might soar an eagle among the clouds? My heart would burst were I to live amid all this softness, sloth, and obscurity. Babieca, my gallant steed," he cried to his war-horse, which he had named after the Cid's, and which came forwards snorting and bounding at the sound of his voice,— "Babieca, wouldst thou not renounce my recreant weight for dooming thee but in thought to the drudgery of a vile peasant's market-horse?"

The blood rushed to Genevieve's cheek; it overspread even brow and bosom. "So wouldst thou deem *thyself* dishonoured, Sir Knight," she cried, "wert thou yoked with such humble mate as me; for ever wouldst thou blush for the shame, for ever reproach her who was its cause, and its victim."

"I should only have to reproach myself," said Amirald, whose feelings flowed in rapid and contending tides, "for having risked all for one, who had not even a heart to offer in return."

Genevieve, without speaking, fixed her eyes on him, till feeling them suffused with tears, she withdrew them. "Is this generous? is it noble?" she said at last, with a faltering voice—"is it even kind, Sir Knight?" she added, in one still more subdued, "to crush out from a heart by torture, the secret it ought to keep—if it could?"—"And canst thou love, sweet Genevieve?" said the youth, half-reclining to-

wards her, while his pleading tones and glowing eyes made that moment more dangerous than a thousand hours of reproaches.—“Is it manly, Sir Knight, to pursue such poor triumph farther?” said the weeping maiden.—“Nay, weep not, sweet Genevieve; in sooth I spoke but in jest; I love these scenes, I love all that is soft, soothing, and lonely: I love these leaves,” he cried, catching at some from a pendant branch, “for they remind me of the couch which the gentle heretic once spread for the wounded knight. *But*,” he added, and then glancing at his accoutrements, some of which lay glittering on the turf where he reclined, and pointing to his war-steed, “*But*”——“I feel, Sir Knight, what thou wouldst say,” she uttered: “here let our conference end; and yet remember, noble, and knight as thou art, that *He* who made man for happiness, and was the best judge of his own work, placed him at his creation, not in palace, castle, or city—He placed him in a garden, and called it Paradise.”—“And Paradise would be this spot,” cried the enamoured Amiral, “if—Hark! what sound was that? was it the scream of the eagle?—no, by Heaven, the breath of the trumpet! and lo where an armed band bears up the hill! Ha! the lilies of France glitter in the van. To horse, fellows! my helmet, my gorget, help to don them quickly: it must doubtless be some noble company: fear not, maiden, I will be with thee soon.”

And Sir Amiral rode away at full speed with some of the men-at-arms. Genevieve followed him with her eyes, and saw on the summit of a hill a band of knights and men-at-arms, who, with bugles sounded and banners displayed, proudly crested the eminence where they stood, seeming the precursors of a more numerous host that was following. A stately form in complete armour appeared the leader of the train; a person in the habit of a monk stood by his side, and Sir Amiral soon rode by the other. Cordial and courtly greeting passed; a brief but earnest conference then took place between the three; at the

termination of which, Sir Amirald rode off with speed in another direction, attended by a few followers of the stranger band.

Genevieve continued to gaze in the direction he pursued long after he disappeared, and then, with an indefinable feeling of dejection and anxiety, turned to look on her few remaining companions. Reading neither intelligence or comfort in their looks, and not suffering herself to doubt of Amirald's swift return, she remounted her horse, and dropping her veil sat in anxious silence. She was not long left in suspense; a man, in the habit of a pursuivant, approached from the stranger party, and, after exchanging a few words in a tone of authority with her companions, approached her with an air in which licentious freedom was blended with mock courtesy. "Fair damsel," said he, "it is the command of the princely leader of yonder band, that I conduct you to him, and that you share the protection of his company." Genevieve, mute from consternation, made no reply; the man then attempted to raise her veil, but she held it closely; he then caught her rein and led her a few steps onward. "Sir stranger," she said, checking her horse, "whatever claims your leader may have on your obedience, I know none he holds on mine." "He is noble, damsel," said the man haughtily; "let that suffice thee."—"If he be noble, let him prove it," said Genevieve, "by shewing all gentleness to a female left in the guard of a noble knight, who hath most suddenly and strangely left her."—"Mass!" said another who joined them, "this dainty maiden deems there is but one paramour in the world for her; cheer thee, damsel, shalt have a host anon, men-at-arms and all."—"Curb thy loose tongue," said the other, who saw Genevieve almost dead at his words, "and let me lead the lady on." "In the name of Heaven, gentle sir," said Genevieve.—"By the mass, a heretic!" cried the other, "or thou wouldst have called some blessed saint, and never have troubled Heaven for the matter."—"Alas, you

seem of gentler speech than this wild man," said Genevieve, turning to the first, who continued to lead her horse; "in the name of whatever may win your ear, I implore you to tell me into what hands I have fallen, and where you are leading me."

Her conductor, instead of answering, called to the driver of a horse-litter which appeared in sight, to halt. "Ah, ha!" cried the other, as two females, gaudily dressed, alit from it, with evident marks of reluctance and vexation; "ah, ah! my bonni-bells—my laced muttons—descend—dismount—give place—ye must foot it, my pretty does, unless some merciful man-at-arms or gentle squire of dames, take ye *en-croupe*."

"Vile hilding!—unnurtured slave!" said the incensed females—"is it thus thou talkest to ladies of our state?" He continued to laugh, and they to rail, while Genevieve stood amid the rude men and licentious women like an angel in the presence of fiends.—"Gentle dames," she said, trembling, "in the name of womanhood, plead for me."

"Is this the beauty so much prized?" said one of them, as Genevieve raised her veil to speak.—"This helps not," said her companion, lifting her from her horse, and placing her with the female attendant in the litter.—"One word—but one word," she cried, forcing back the curtain.—"Am I in the power of him they call the Bishop of Toulouse?"—The man regarded her with a look of compassion for the first time.—"If the Bishop of Toulouse be friend of thine," he said, "would thou wert;" and he closed the door of the litter.

The brief winter day was now on the wane. The party, who appeared to have halted merely for refreshment, prepared for departure, and, heedless of the mute despair of Genevieve, and the clamorous grief of her attendant, amid the clash of arms and the sound of trumpets, all the train rode on, the bannered lilies of France glittering in the van.

CHAPTER XI.

When Greeks join'd Greeks then was the tug of war:
The wearied battle sweat, and conquest bled.

LEE'S *Alexander*.

THE man of mighty mind, the Bishop of Toulouse, had not slumbered during the interval. He had received the intelligence of the escape of the queen and Genevieve from his power, while engaged in the aid of his ally, (as has been mentioned :) on the principle that made him sometimes foment, and sometimes conciliate the constant feuds of the neighbouring dignitaries and barons—the principle of a politician of old—*Divide et impera*. The first effect of his rage at this intelligence would have cost the messenger his life, had it not been qualified by other and more welcome tidings that arrived almost at the same moment. By his emissaries in Paris the bishop learned that king Philip was about to dispatch troops and treasure in the cause of the Crusaders, under the conduct of an unknown leader: and, what was of higher importance at that juncture, that Count Raymond, who was always satisfied with slight advantages and feeble efforts, had retired to his territorial city of Toulouse, conceiving that he had risked enough for the Albigeois, and was again employing powerful agency at Rome, to effect his reconciliation with the pope. From other missives he learned, that many of the more powerful barons of Languedoc, whose vassals were of the new sect, incensed at the slaughter and spoliation of their people, murmured against the severity of the crusade, and waited but a signal to take the abdicated place of Count Raymond. To all this was added the intelligence, that Count Simon de Monfort, to whose pretensions

and high-established fame the court of Rome had hitherto conceded every thing, was slowly recovering from his wounds, and would not be able to take the field till the following spring. The bishop instantly raised the siege, and returned to his castle at Beaucaire. There he held a feast; dignitaries and nobles thronged to it, and the result was all that his ambition could aspire to: to the devout, he suggested the scandal that a mob of heretics, a vile peasantry, should yet defy the power of the nobles, and the thunders of the church, and wander about propagating their vile abuses of religion; to the warlike he declaimed on the disgrace the cause of the church must suffer, if they allowed their lances to rust, because Simon de Monfort's wounds were unhealed; to the rapacious, he promised the plunder of the lands of those barons who secretly favoured the cause of the Albigensis, and to the timid and politic (who were the fewest of the party) he hinted the danger of the powerful lords of Languedoc rising in aid of their distressed vassals, if some strong effort were not made, some powerful blow struck on the instant. The hall rung with acclamations; the bishop seized the moment, "when their hearts were jocund and sublime," to propose himself as their leader. The place of rendezvous was fixed at Nismes; and the next morning's dawn saw the warlike prelate ride, in his own proud element, at the head of fifteen hundred lances, to meet the Crusaders in that city.

He had vital reasons for urging matters with the utmost dispatch: he was ignorant of the late reconciliation between Philip and his queen, and knowing that the troops had marched in consequence of his belief of her detention, and would be recalled as soon as the truth of her escape was known, he hastened to put himself at their head before that intelligence had reached king Philip, satisfied that he might then defy both the pope and king, when commanding a force that would not lightly desert such a leader. With these hopes and views he hurried on at the head of

his train towards Nismes, as he had learned that the troops of king Philip had marched in that direction. We mention these circumstances as explanatory of the scenes that followed Genevieve's capture, to which we have now to reconduct our readers.

The party travelled all the evening, and at night-fall arrived at the town of Nismes. Genevieve, uncertain of her destination, felt at last, from the slower motion of the litter, and the increasing tumult of voices and trampling of horses, that the party had reached their place of rendezvous. The lights of the town of Nismes began to glimmer through the curtains of her litter. Knights and peers, with their tumultuous cavalcades, rode away in the search of abode in the town, thinning not imperceptibly to Genevieve's ears the concourse and the noise. Yet she watched the parting of every knight and noble with his train, as if a friend rode away from her unprotected side. The litter still continued to proceed, though the attendants appeared to be diminished to a few individuals. At length it stopped, and Genevieve, who was assisted to alight from it, found herself in a place which she could not compare with any other that sight or even imagination had ever before presented her with.

It was a vast area, the ground unequal and frequently encumbered with huge masses of stone, of which some appeared the effect of recent dilapidation, and others were cloathed with hoary moss, the growth of centuries. There was no roof; and the moon "walking in brightness" above her head, shed her full light on masses of building, that, viewed even from the distance where she stood in the centre of the area, seemed to have been the work of antediluvian giants; arches above arches, supporting ponderous seats of marble, rose to a height that made the eye giddy; yet, in all this vast range of edifice, there was no vestige of human habitation. The stars glimmered through the tenantless arches, and the foliage waved lightly to the moon, as the breeze sigh-

ed through this vast and desolate monument of departed power. Genevieve had beheld all that was great, sublime, and even terrific in nature ; but it was with a new sensation of awe that she gazed round her on this stony desert of man's creation—this huge skeleton, that might once have been clothed with myriads of poulation.* She would have inquired where she was ; but the thought of her own fearful situation rushed on her, and she was silent.

When they had advanced a short space, the man who conducted her, suddenly lowering his torch, pointed to her to enter a small recess, where was a seat of stone, over which he threw his mantle ; and then placing the torch in a nook, made a sign to her female attendant to withdraw while he himself retired. So utterly subdued were her spirits, so hopeless was her heart, that she made no attempt to deprecate this ominous movement, but by clasping her hands in mute and unheeded supplication.

He soon after returned with refreshments, of which he pressed her to partake ; and she then recovered breath to implore him to tell her in whose hands she was, and for what purpose she had been brought to a place so dreary. The man gazed on her a moment, and, answering only by a laugh that froze her blood, again withdrew.

Starting from her trance of stupefaction, she tried to examine the place, and discover if it afforded even the most desperate means of escape. A large aperture in the wall of the recess where she was placed, gave her a view of the area below, on which the moonlight fell in full lustre. Under one of the lower arches, a band of armed men were seen carousing by the light of torches, which they had fixed against the walls. Two of distinguished port, and fully armed except their heads, were walking at some distance, and occasionally appeared to issue orders and make inquiries, or interfere to check the rude mirth

* The Amphitheatre of Nîmes.

of the revellers. One of them was evidently the leader of the band they had encountered that day; the other seemed an ancient knight: but, whoever they might be, they were evidently objects of the deepest reverence to the rest; as, at their lightest word, one or other darted forth from beneath the arch, with his flaring torch, seeming to demand their pleasure. And Genevieve, amid all her terrors, could not help admiring the darkly-seen and solitary grandeur of these forms, moving alone, amid that vast pile, like its former inhabitants returned to visit earth; while the sudden flashes of light and involutions of darkness, caused by the gleam and disappearance of the torches, seemed like shadows of gigantic spectres following each other, in their majestic flight from the deserted ruins.

In a short time, the knights, apparently to shun the noise of their followers, quitted that part of the area, and walked nearer the aperture within which Genevieve withdrew herself, while every word of their conference came to her distinctly in the stillness of the night. The younger appeared at first to be rebuking the elder, for addressing him by some title that he wished to disclaim.—“Be it as thou wilt, Sir Knight of the Lilies,” said the other, who happened to be our old friend Sir Aymer—“but what dost thou mean by this masking? Why art thou thus disguised at the head of a valiant, potent band?”—“To accomplish two the dearest purposes I cherish,” answered the other: “to deceive my father, and to confront and confound that proud prelate of Toulouse.”

“That children should deceive their parents,” said Sir Aymer, “is doubtless the law of nature, or of custom, which comes to the same thing. I had that virtue in my youth, but let that pass. Wherefore chafest thou so hotly against the warlike prelate?”—“I hate him—hate him deadly,” answered the younger speaker, inhaling the air as he spoke, like a reined and impatient steed. “The throne of King Philip

is but a toy—an infant's bauble ; while its power, if not its seat, is shared by his insolent encroaching vassals, the Bishop of Toulouse and Count Simon de Monfort. How the proud prelate will chafe, when he sees *who* leads the lances of King Philip.”—“ Men say he rides at the head of two thousand lances himself,” answered Sir Aymer ; “ and thinkest thou he will lightly yield them to another leader ? ”—“ Lightly or not, he *shall* yield them,” said the other, fiercely ; “ the bull may bellow in his grange, but he will tremble when he hears the lion roar, and feels that he has dared to cross his path.”—“ Royal whelp,” said Sir Aymer, “ take heed that thou roar not too loud, ere thy fangs and claws be fully grown.”

The other was silent for a moment, and then said, in a voice almost choked with passion,—“ By Heaven, Sir Knight de Chastelroi, thou dost not suffer the privilege my indulgence has allowed thee of being my reprovee to go into abeyance.”—“ Jesters are allowed their privilege, my liege,” said Sir Aymer ; “ and perchance the office of a jester and a reprovee are always the same ; at least they are both alike the subjects of scorn and of neglect. But, meanwhile, spend not thy spleen on me, Sir Knight of the Lilies ; hoard it all up for the Bishop of Toulouse. If all report says be true, he will have enough to hoard and vent in his turn : all provocation that thou canst give him is light compared with that which awaits him.”—“ How meanest thou ? ” said the other, impatiently.—“ Even what I say, my liege : report reached me on the way, that Simon de Monfort himself is on his journey hither, and that his warlike dame hath flung plaster and cataplasm, cullis and cordial, at the leech's head, and braced him in iron from head to heel. Some ears have heard his trumpets ; but that must be by witchcraft.”—“ Now, by Heaven ! I should wish to hear them this moment,” replied the interlocutor. “ Ha ! goes the game there ?—then have I to confront the haughty prelate in his pride, and the brutal De Monfort in his borrowed power. The

thought stirs my blood. Methinks we resemble three streams that I have seen falling from the mountains, narrow, feeble, and chafing with their rocky banks ; but, when they dashed into the valley, and met together conflicting, how loud was their uproar, how fierce their encounter !—the spray ascending up the silent rocks from which they fell, and the roar heard and felt among the mountains, which the conflict shook to their bases.”—“ It may be a magnificent metaphor,” said Sir Aymer ; “ but in my poor opinion it resembles more what I have seen in a *morality*, when the fool, iniquity, and the devil, after playing their several passions, met at last on the stage, and belaboured each other, to the huge contentment of the audience. A merry, mad world,” Sir Aymer added, half sighing, half whistling, apart to himself, “ when three bands of the Crusaders meet to destroy the heretics, and then pause first, to ask whether they must not previously knock out each other’s brains ?” —“ But thou wilt stand by me,” said the younger knight ; “ thou wilt doubtless stand by me :” he spoke doubtingly.—“ With heart and brand, with life and limb, my liege,” answered Sir Aymer ; and, when he had thus spoken with all the energy of feudal faith and chivalric loyalty, he added some light words, intimating the facility with which females might be won, when the approaching war must make wooers scarce.

The other speaker appeared to withdraw from the topic with that disgust which youth feels at the ill-affected follies of age—“ By Heaven,” he said, “ thou preachest better than a Dominican, for thou dost thoroughly distaste one of sin and folly. To hear one so old, and yet so vicious, is merely a disgust to youth.”—“ *I* vicious ? I defy thee,” said Sir Aymer, “ prove me such, and I will abide thy questioning.”—“ Darest thou deny that thou canst over-drink even the abbot of Normoutier—that most bibulous and misquoting churchman ?” —“ The church gives both example and precept,” quoth Sir Aymer : “ Some

choose the former, and some the latter : for myself, I adopt the example, not the precept, of the church ; and on that quarrel I will fight while there is a grape to be pressed in Languedoc.”—“ That thou wilt game with a page, cheat with a jongleur, and lie with a palmer who pretendeth that he hath been in the land of Armeny ! ”—“ The former was a churchly vice, the latter a princely one ; for I have heard *thee* forswear thyself at tennis like a — ; but all simile fails. Proceed ; I have no doubt to prove myself virtuous at the last.”—“ That thou art a most unconscionable — ? ”—“ Nay, thou art the devil reproving sin. Whereto tends this goodly masque thou art acting this night ? Wherefore art thou apart from thy train, amid these solitary ruins ? And what means that damsel in the nook, (the beatings of whose heart I can hear as I walk,) whom thou didst bear away from her guide and champion ? Ha, my royal hawk, thou art about to pounce on thy quarry, and yet reproving a poor mousing owl like me, that am fain to blink for my prey sometimes in a barn.”—His companion laughed vehemently at the reprisal of the old knight, and then swore deeply that nothing pleased him more in the adventure than sending her champion on a wild emprise to tilt against a tower inhabited by spirits—“ By our Lady of Notre Dame,” he cried, “ unless I had that fanatic dotard, that monk of Montcalm, to aid me with his tales of witchcraft, and I know not what, I never could have won that saucy stripling (who hath not a hair on his cheek, though he presumes to love) to sever from her side.”—“ Speak not so lightly of spirits and witchcraft, specially in this lonely place,” said Sir Aymer, crossing himself ; “ thou art not an infidel ! Marry, this darkness and loneliness were enough to convert a man.” (The train had retired, and a single solitary torch shed its light over the vast extent of the area.)—“ An infidel ! I scorn thy words : I am about to convert a heretic, and when I have taught her her creed, thou shalt confirm her

in it."—Sir Aymer laughed again, and then demanded, in a careless tone, if he knew the name of the knight whom he had robbed of his prize with the unconscions help of the monk of Montcalm.—"Name," repeated the other; "name—methinks they call him Sir Amirald."

The steps of Sir Aymer were instantly checked, and his tone altered. "Sir Amirald," he repeated; "he who fell in our mad encounter with the Albigeois, headed by Raymond of Toulouse."—"Ay,—fell like thee, and many others, to rise again."—"He who did good service to Queen Ingelberg, pleading in her cause on an occasion thou wottest of."—"He was overpaid by a kiss of the queen's hand;—a landless, birthless, nameless, nothing—knighted for some mad exploit of chivalry."—"I heard he saved the life of King Philip at the battle of Bovines," said Sir Aymer, with increasing emphasis: "was that the mad deed of chivalry thou speakest of?"—"And if he did," answered the other, "his exploit, as thou lovest to term it, prevented the crown of France from descending on a brow that would have worn it better. Deemest thou I owe him deep obligation for such exploit?" and he dwelt on the word maliciously.

"Sir Knight of the Lilies," said Sir Aymer, "since such it is thy pleasure to be called, here I pause. I have a foolish fondness for that boy, and somehow cannot bear to see him wronged. Were it the loose leman of a common youth; but no, no—I cannot brook this."—"What dost thou, what *darest* thou mean?" said the other in wrath; "is not the boy a plebeian?—is not the maiden a heretic?"—"Plebeian—heretic—what thou wilt," answered Sir Aymer; "she is to me as sacred in yonder nook, as an enshrined nun in her cloister: and I say, Sir Knight of the Lilies, that in *her* cause, *her* champion and protector being absent by base fraud—fraud, mark me—I will wield brand against a host!"—"Traitor-knight!" exclaimed the other, "wilt thou

turn thy brand against thy——” “Not for my life!” answered Sir Aymer, sheathing the sword he had half drawn. “But this I say, that if thou doest young Amirald such deep wrong, never more will Sir Aymer and his fifty faithful lances ride by thy standard—never more will——” “Hence, dotard, with thy threats!” said the other, stamping in fury: “hence with thyself, thy menace, and thy men-at-arms! and in thine absence I will have leisure to weigh which I hold in the greater disdain.” He broke from Sir Aymer as he spoke, and in a moment after Genevieve had the horror to see him burst into the recess where she sat, his inflamed visage and flashing eye betokening that the late conference had done aught but assuage the passions that already burned too fiercely. His first impression was evidently that of awe—the awe that the presence of perfect beauty inspires; and he stood before her, now first seen, like one who has broken into a sanctuary to plunder it, and, dazzled by the glory of the holy ornaments, stands amazed at his intended sacrilege. Genevieve was the first to recover herself, and assume, at least, the courage necessary for speaking. “Noble knight,” she said, tremulously, “I thank you for your care of me in my journey, and for my quiet though somewhat lonely lodgment here; and I crave to know when I may be permitted to rejoin my party; when my thanks shall be doubled—yea, trebled?” And in agonizing sincerity she pressed her hands on her bosom.—“Fair maiden,” said the youth, gathering courage from her sweet and timid accents, from which he drew a favourable but false augury of the pliancy of her character,—“fair maiden, thy thanks are most grateful guerdon; but, perchance, I may ambition a higher and dearer reward.” —“The thanks of a noble knight shall be added to mine,” said Genevieve, in a voice still more earnest, “for the protection vouchsafed to his deserted companion.” —“His thanks?” repeated the youth, in a tone of high disdain; “his thanks? Yes, he owes

me much, and thou dost well to turn me over to him for payment ; but I mean in his absence to exact it from a fairer debtor.”—“ If thou meanest my ransom, Sir Knight,” said Genevieve, who struggled with her own conviction to misunderstand him, “ and if thou wilt deign to accept ransom for one of nameless birth, it shall be paid. I have jewels—jewels of price : all, all shall be placed in thine hands, so thou wilt restore me to my friends in safety and honour.” And at this moment she would indeed have willingly placed the costly gift of the queen in his hands, on the conditions she named.—“ I will accept thy ransom,” said the youth, approaching her, “ when thou canst show me a ruby with a tint like thy lip, or a diamond with a beam like thine eye ; or, would I had not to add, a pearl pale and precious as thy cheek.” Her cheek was indeed pale.—“ Noble knight,” she cried, no longer daring to misunderstand him, “ noble knight, have mercy on me !” and she fell on her face at his feet.—“ Mercy on thee !” said the youth, walking a few paces from her, and evidently embarrassed at her appeal,—“ mercy on thee ! And what mercy hast thou on me ? Is not each word, each look, each movement, doing the work of many daggers on mine heart ? Maiden, thou hast bowed thyself before me : I bow to thee in my turn ; and, trust me, no common suppliant pleads. Pity, and love me.” “ Oh, Amirald ! where art thou ?” cried Genevieve, in agony unutterable.—“ Amirald again !” said the youth with fierce impatience : “ what, is thy fancy so weak and worthless, dwelling on that boy—that stripling, blushing and beardless ? *Thou* for whom, but for thy plebeian birth and accursed creed, the lances of every knight from Nismes to Paris might be shivered, and——” “ Oh, let them be my advocates !” cried Genevieve—“ my lowly birth, my hated creed ; let them plead for me ! I am unworthy of thy meanest thought, noble knight : spurn me—dismiss me—crush me to the earth !”

"And *Amirald*," said the youth, pacing the narrow recess furiously—"Amirald?—no, Sir Amirald:—it is plain whence such familiar speech hath its rise between a heretic peasant and a belted knight."—"Believe that too," said Genevieve; "believe all that is vile of me—all that can make me unworthy of thee."—"And if I did," said her companion, "yet hardly can I believe it," he added, gazing on her pure and pallid beauty: "and if I did, darest thou play the coy one with *me*, when by thine own confession thou hast acted other part with that strippling, that boy?"—"Oh no, no," cried Genevieve in agony; "I wronged, I belied him: he is innocent as I am: disregard, disdain me—but doubt not of the truth and loyalty of Sir Amirald."—"So much zeal for one without name, without descent, without lineage, and all under the name of gratitude!" said the youth, retreating from her with a proud step, and measuring her with a prouder eye. "What, then, canst thou deny, under the name of *love*, to one who wooes thee in the highest title that ever reached the ear of plebeian damsel? The fairest dames in France have courted the distinction thou hast scorned. It is not for me to sue. Vile peasant, thou mayst count amongst the highest honours of thy life, that of being the paramour of Lewis the Dauphin of France."

At the word, Genevieve uttered a shriek of ecstasy. She sprang on her feet, and, tearing the ring from her finger, cried, "Art thou the Dauphin, Prince Lewis of France? Then am I safe as the daughter of King Philip in a warded tower, with princes for her guard. Thou canst not destroy the peace and fame of her who saved thy mother's life! The scar is on my breast—the ring is in thine hand—the proof is in thine heart!" she exclaimed, with increasing energy, as she saw Prince Lewis bend over the ring, which she almost forced into his hand. "Oh, never can the son destroy the preserver of the mother! Approach—touch me now, if thou darest!"

Then her enthusiasm subsiding, and her habitual feelings of submission to lofty rank recurring—"Oh no, if thou *canst*—," she cried, sinking on her knees before the Dauphin.

Prince Lewis, agitated by many feelings, in silence held the ring to the light afforded by the torch, and examined it closely. The report of his mother's deliverance, and escape, by aid of the courage of a female prisoner, had reached him. He had heard also the report, which perhaps touched him nearer, of Sir Amirald being appointed as the protector of a fair heretic, on her progress to join her friends at Toulouse, and had immediately resolved to be a personal judge of that beauty whose fame was so fair; but he had not expected to behold in that female the preserver of his mother; on whom, amid all his licentious propensities and fiery passions, he doted fondly. "It is true," he said at length, "thou hast given a pledge which shall be nobly redeemed, maiden. Thou art the preserver of our mother; I acknowledge the ring of queen Ingelberg. Rise; thou art as safe as if thou wert the daughter of Philip of France, in a royal castle. Why dost thou tremble? The faith of a knight, the honour of a prince, are pledged for thy safety. Rise, and receive this hand in pledge, that thy honour is valued as mine own."

"Princely Dauphin—royal lord," cried Genevieve, writhing in ecstasies of gratitude still at his feet, and struggling to kiss the border of his mantle. As he withdrew it, her lips touched his hand. "Forbear, forbear," said Prince Lewis; "such gratitude is dangerous. Forbear:"—and yet his fingers again sought the caress. "And may I not," he said, "may I not yet gaze on thee, as I should on a portrait? may I not gaze on thee as I should on a sacred image?"—"Royal lord," said Genevieve, shrinking, "I pray you suffer me to depart: it is easy to form a generous resolution, but it is most difficult to keep it."—"By Heaven," said Prince

Lewis, "I begin to feel the truth of what thou sayest in every vein. Ho, my bannerman, Eustache!" he cried, "where is Sir Aymer? hath he quitted these walls?"—"He walks discontentedly, some few paces hence, my liege," said Eustache.—"Summon him on the instant! Sir Aymer," he said, as the old knight slowly and reluctantly approached—"Sir Aymer, thou hast done the devoir of a loyal friend and true knight, in chiding me; and I will do that of a prince in requital. I hold in my hand," taking Genevieve's, "a fair pledge for thy fealty: and if thy faith to me depend on the safe and honourable usage of this damsel, Sir Aymer and his fifty lances will be at the Dauphin's side again to-morrow. Wilt thou be thyself the protector of the maiden?"—"In faith, my liege," answered the knight, "had I not seen the dame, I might have undertaken such office; but as it is, does your Grace think me marble, or a mummy, that you trust me with a charge that St. Anthony's temptations were very snow balls to?"

Prince Lewis smiled internally at the success of his stratagem; for he well knew when he made the proposal, that Sir Aymer, in his affectation of youthful gallantry, would decline it. "How shall I bestow thee, damsel?" he said with assumed perplexity. "Thine accursed creed forbids thee the shelter of a nunnery, and I know none of my train with whom thou mightest be in safe keeping, till the return of young Amirald. Eustache," he cried, giving his bannerman a look which he well understood, "seek out some grave and well-reputed matron in the town, and place the damsel with her till——" "Thanks and blessings," interrupted Genevieve, pressing her lips to the hem of his mantle; then dropping her veil, she gave her hand to her new conductor.

Prince Lewis turned hastily, like one who wrests away his mind abruptly from some unpleasant

thoughts, and, accosting Sir Aymer, as if he wished to divert his attention also, he pointed to where a few streaks of grey in the clouds indicated the approach of morning. "Be those clouds," he said, "that gather so darkly on yonder hill?"—"If they be," answered his companion, "they are clouds that will burst in thunder soon. In that very line is the bishop of Toulouse marching by credible report; and, as I look, methinks those clouds change their places like the forms of men in motion."

As he spoke, the trampling of horses was heard, and Bernard de Vaugelas and Pierre de Limosin were seen riding at full speed towards them. They checked their steeds when they saw the dauphin,—
"Tidings, my liege, and of high concernment," they cried, alighting from their horses. "First, welcome, gentlemen and friends," said Lewis; "and next for your tidings."—"We seek your Highness by command of your royal mother," said Vaugelas, "who detached us from her train for the purpose." "How fares our dearest mother?" said Lewis.—
"Well; and commends her to your Highness; and we have ridden two hours before the dawn, to bring you tidings that the Bishop of Toulouse is at hand with fifteen hundred lances at his back."—"And *we* are here, prepared to give him welcome," replied the Dauphin.—"He hath marched with such speed, that he was fain to halt with his overwearied band on yonder hill—(Prince Lewis cast a look of defiance and enmity in the direction);—and thy careful mother enjoins thee to beware the meeting with that proud and potent prelate."—"That is a woman's counsel," said the Dauphin. "What is thine, De Limosin?"—"That your highness beard and brave the hot churchman in his pride. He is to enter the town by dawn, to celebrate the mass in the cathedral of Nismes; and then to offer himself as leader of the armies of the church, to the assembled knights and

peers.”—“Ho, mine armour!” cried Lewis, starting as from a trance; “mine armour, knave!”—“Your highness is already armed,” said Vaugelas, “as well by the presence of your faithful knights as by your stoutest harness.”—“I meant not that,” said Lewis, vexed at perceiving that his emotion was observed; “I meant that this armour was too heavy. I must haste to my lodging to change it. Where is Eustache? but I sent him on other errand. This news hath bewildered me, I think,” he added with a forced smile. “Noble knights, gentlemen, friends, may I depend on your aid on the morrow, when we meet the proud prelate?”—“As firmly as on the brand your highness leans on,” answered the knights.—“I must haste to the town,” said Lewis; “I must rouse and summon my noble friends to join me on the morrow: the *morrow*? by Heaven, it is already bright dawn! There is not a moment to be lost: Sir Aymer, thou wilt with us?”—“So please you, my liege,” said Sir Aymer, “I have had somewhat a restless night, and have also a foreboding that to-morrow will be a doubtful if not a bloody day; and methinks I would willingly secure some mortal rest in this world, before I am dismissed to my final one.”—“Come then with me, De Vaugelas, and noble De Limosin; your spirits are untired: come with me, and let us try if a son of France or a shaveling churchman hath most influence with her noble and puissant chivalry.”—“We wait on your highness, and demand but to be put to the proof,” said the knights.—“If I meet Sir Amirald,” said Sir Aymer, “I will bid him haste to your aid, my liege.”—“And when I am king of France, I will appoint thee to the office of my jester in requital,” answered Prince Lewis, as he hastened toward the town, where all that morning he toiled among the knights and peers who had followed his standard, exacting renewed oaths of fidelity, and receiving assurances of

it, grounded more on their hatred to the Bishop of Toulouse, than on their attachment to the ambitious, voluptuous, and vindictive Dauphin. In these anxious conferences two hours passed away, and the morning sun broke on the city of Nismes.

CHAPTER XII.

Come one—come all. Yon rock shall fly
From its firm base as soon as I.

Lady of the Lake.

By its earliest light the Bishop of Toulouse and his train had ridden into the city. Immediately on his arrival he hastened to the cathedral to celebrate mass ; but as he passed through the aisle, he was struck by the sight of a number of knights, who were ranged like statues on either side, completely armed and with their visors closed ; and who returned slight or rather no obeisance to the bishop, as he marched amid a train of nobles and ecclesiastics towards the altar. Their appearance caught the eye of the bishop as he passed on amid ranks of bowing churchmen and kneeling knights craving his benediction, which he dispensed with due solemnity, and then, as he approached the altar, and prepared to change his robes for the ceremony, sent his crosier-bearer to demand of the knights why they assumed such hostile and unwonted guise in the church. The knights answered not a word, and kept their visors down. The ceremony began : again a messenger was despatched to require them to depart, if they joined not in external devotion at least, while the holy mysteries were celebrating. The crosier-bearer, who delivered the second message, seemed to himself, as he said, to walk amid the pillars of a cathedral, so stern, erect, and motionless stood the figures ; and he returned with another report of the impenetrable silence of the unknown knights.—The sacred bell was rung, and every head and knee was bent to the earth at the sound, but those of the party that filled the aisle. At the conclusion of the ceremony, which the bishop performed with imposing dignity, yet not

altogether without some misgivings of heart, he prepared to address the congregation, which was composed of his own train of knights and men-at-arms, (mixed with the troops of king Philip,) from the altar where he stood; that his appeal might want no influence of the spiritual power in aid of the forces of the temporal, with which he felt himself amply furnished. His address, powerful and eloquent, was received with loud acclamations by his own party; and they were even echoed by some of king Philip's troops, with whom the character of the warlike prelate stood high. The mute and visored figures who filled the aisle of the cathedral were observed to exchange whispers with each other at this latter sound. "For you, noble knights," said the bishop, "though your demeanour hath been somewhat discourteous and full of mystery, though ye have refused to raise your visors, or to utter speech, or to join in the rites of holy church, we honour you as the leaders of those troops whom king Philip, that faithful son of the church, hath sent in aid of her cause, now at its utmost peril; and demand of you (and such demand ye will perchance deign to answer) to know whose hands ye are commissioned to entrust them?—A single knight stepped forward, and stood in the centre of the aisle, confronting the bishop as he stood by the high altar, and without raising his visor or altering his posture, answered, "To the hands of him who led them here."—"And who is he?" demanded the bishop.—"Lewis, the dauphin of France," said the knight, raising his visor, while all the knights of his train at the signal made a similar disclosure; and the bishop of Toulouse beheld around him the countenances of many of the noblest and the most hostile peers and knights of France.

For a moment his presence of mind forsook him. He had believed Prince Lewis far distant, waging unsuccessful war in England, and wasting his time and troops before Dover Castle, in consequence of *he reproach of King Philip, who, on the the mention*

of his son's exploits and successes in England, remarked he had not yet got *its key*. Yet Prince Lewis was on the spot confronting him, and at the head of Philip's troops. For a moment, we say, his self-possession forsook him; but in the next he recovered himself, and descending from the steps of the altar, advanced to meet the Dauphin.—“My liege prince and future sovereign,” he said with dignity, “we greet you well with the homage of true hearts and strong hands, armed alike in the cause of your royal house and of the church. But wherefore hath your grace come upon us thus in disguise?”—“Lord bishop,” said Prince Lewis, with somewhat of a grim smile, “men ever go to a doubtful feast masked.” The bishop of Toulouse passed on to greet the knights of Prince Lewis's train; and it was admirable to see the address with which he hailed those whom he deemed the most accessible, and the dignity with which he met the most hostile; while from time to time he bent his ear to a lame and diminutive figure who hobbled beside him, and seemed to be playing the fool amid the magnificent pageantry of that ecclesiastical drama. This was no other than Sir Ambrose, (the *ci-devant* Deacon Mephibosheth,) who was whispering to him intelligence of which he resolved in this exigency instantly to avail himself. The ceremonial of meeting over, the bishop again retired to the altar, near which Prince Lewis and his train ranged themselves in firm and steady line; and exalting his voice, “Nobles, and knights of France,” he cried, “I have rendered the duty of a subject to the son of my liege lord the king, and must now render it to the son of Him whose minister I am, and in whose temple I stand. In *his* cause we are armed and his favour alone can bid our banners float in triumph; but shall we dare to hope for that favour if those banners are grasped by the hand that caresses a heretic? Yes, noble peers, ye well may look amazed! Prince Lewis, who claims the honour of leading you, nourishes in his bosom a heretic con-

eubine, and stained with such mortal sin, is unworthy to fight even among the meanest ranks of the army of the church."

At this charge, the substance of which had been overheard by Sir Ambrose in whispered conversation among Prince Lewis's knights, and had been instantly communicated to the bishop, who seized on it as a desperate defence in his extremity—at this charge, a murmur was heard among the crusaders, many of whom began to cast looks of disdain and distrust on the Dauphin. Prince Lewis's soul rushed to his face, not with shame, but with rage; and, instead of addressing the knights he turned fiercely on the bishop—"And is it thou," he cried—"thou who darest to reprove thy prince for lightness!"

"For thy foul slanders, prince," said the bishop, with an insolent affectation of meekness, "thou hast my pity and my prayers. Methinks the fair beauty, the lady Blanche,* and the respect thou owest to the royal house of Castile, should recall thee from wandering in quest of light and lawless love."—"Insolent and meddling priest!" exclaimed Lewis, maddening at being thus checked and schooled in the presence of his nobles, "what hast thou to do with thy prince's domestic concerns, or with his royal right? the which he will maintain in spite and in scorn of thee! Judge, lords, how lightly this proud churchman will prize your honours, when he dares thus check your sovereign in the presence of his subjects."—"Ungrateful as thou art forgetful!" cried the bishop, kindling in his turn—"is it thus thou speakest of churchmen, to whom thy father owes his throne and life? Who, at the battle of Bovines, marshalled the array, and fought in the van of King Philip's host?—who won the day that else had seen King Philip throneless?—Guerin, the warlike bishop of Senlis.* Who, on that day, armed only with a

* Blanche of Castile, wife of Lewis, and daughter of Alphonso and Elinor of England.

* Vide, for this and the following, *L'Histoire de France*, par *M. Velly*.

mace of iron, (for the holy man would not draw sword, to avoid the guilt of bloodshed,) felled to the earth and made prisoner the stout Earl of Salisbury?—Philip de Dreux, bishop of Beauvais. And is it for *thee* to scoff at churchmen? Profane prince, prouder heads and stouter hearts than thine have bowed, and *shall* bow yet, to their power. Remember Henry, emperor of Germany, doing penance barefoot and in winter at the gates of a pontiff's castle."—"Where the holy father," interrupted Lewis, "was revelling with the Countess Matilda."—"Out on thee, ribald—reviler! Remember examples nearer home: remember Henry of England, lashed by monks at the tomb of the holy Becket; and his son John kneeling, but as yesterday, to receive his crown, at the footstool of the legate Pandulf."—"Remember *thou* also," retorted Lewis, "the noble letter of Eudes, duke of Burgundy, to my father; wherein he counselled him neither to make peace nor war at the command of pope or cardinal; where he swore to aid him with his vassals, treasure and right arm in their spite, and to enter into no treaty with them without his sovereign: remember the answer of King Philip to thy master, pope Innocent, that he owed his royaume to God and his sword, and thought scorn to hold them by permission of a priest.* If our annals hold such matter as thou hast quoted, (eternal shame to the churchmen who write them!) their brighter pages show many an example of high resolve and noble defiance to the insolence of priestly power."—"Judge, peers of France," cried the bishop, "how fit is he to lead the armies of the church, who thus insults her minister and defies her power! Hence, prince Dauphin; waste if thou wilt the troops and treasures of France in nameless exploits and fruitless conquests on English land; but dream not of leading the armies of the faithful. Men mocked at the laxity of King John, when the depu-

* Vide M. Velly.

ties of Rouen came to him to implore succours for the last city that held out for him in Normandy, and found him playing at chess; and how much seemlier were it that the crusaders should demand where was their leader, and be answered, 'Dallying in his tent in the arms of a cursed heretic.'—"The heretic shall be burnt," cried Sir Ambrose (who had not forgotten his rancour against the luckless Gede-vieve; "she shall be burnt with fire."—"Traitor-priest!" cried Lewis, losing all self-command, and laying his hand on his sword.—"Impious prince," said the bishop, (while Sir Ambrose retreated behind him,) "is it in the house of God that thou assailest his servant?

The knights interposed, and Prince Lewis, sheathing his half-drawn sword and stamping with fury, exclaimed in a choked voice, "How long, my lords of France, will ye see your prince baited by these cowed and mitred bloodhounds?—Is there a noble among you—a knight—a Frenchman, gentlemen, who will fight under other standard, when his sovereign's is displayed? or join in other *cri d'armes*, when the word is *Montjoie St. Denis*?"

The last words uttered with the utmost power of the Dauphin's voice, were echoed by all his train; and even by many of the bishop's, who yielded to the feeling of the moment; and the cathedral of Nismes, cloister, aisle, and roof, rang to the cry of *Montjoie St. Denis*! But at this moment, louder than all the acclamations, was heard the sound of trumpets blown at a short distance, and announcing some distinguished approach. The bishop of Toulouse instantly recognised the trumpets of the Count de Montfort; for in those days, as it is said, every one of high distinction had a blast or note sounded peculiar to themselves, and which was well known to hearers even at a remote distance. The bishop's countenance changed; but instantly commanding its expression, and adopting the only alternative of which the sudden and desperate emergency allowed, he

quitted his station by the altar and advanced towards the Dauphin, wisely judging that he could more easily govern the volatile and impetuous Lewis, even at the head of an army, than Simon de Monfort alone. As he advanced towards the prince, who, suspecting the meaning of this sudden movement, kept his hand on his dagger,—“My liege prince,” he said, “here let our strife end. I yield me to thy claim: I transfer mine own to strengthen thine. Let us unite together against this Simon de Monfort, who will else prove too powerful for either singly. I will march under the oriflamme of my sovereign, but not beneath the banners of a subject.” Lewis gazed on him for a space, as one would on some fierce animal, which, in the act to spring on and rend him, suddenly crouches at his feet, as dreading his treachery not less than his fury: “Be it so,” he cried at last, like one taken by surprise; “but if thou playest me false!” The bishop answered only by a significant gesture; and, while this short scene passed, the band of De Monfort came pouring into the cathedral church of Nismes: page, pursuivant, and even herald—such was the royal state in which Simon de Monfort rode—crowded into the aisles, followed by the men-at-arms, knights, and peers, who had gathered round his standard; and last appeared De Monfort himself. He entered the aisle slowly and painfully, but still with an air of conscious and habitual superiority: his hair and beard were long and neglected; his features, naturally harsh, and now squalid from long illness, had almost a ghastly expression; and this was increased by the swathes in which his head was still bound. He wore his armour, but with evident difficulty, as still scarce able to bear its weight; and over it, instead of a surcoat, was thrown a mantle lined with miniver. His gigantic form was bowed by infirmity; but, though he moved with pain, he still tried to move erect, and his hollow voice had abated nothing of its usual haughty tone of command.

As he reached the centre of the aisle, and stood leaning on his huge sword, and looking round him with a portentous aspect of silent inquiry, he seemed like the gigantic spectre of some departed warrior, who had started from the grave in arms as he lay, at the last summons. The Bishop of Toulouse advanced to meet him; while Prince Lewis whispered to the knights, by whom he was surrounded, and who had stood in amaze at the sudden accommodation between the hostile prince and prelate.

"My lord de Monfort," said the bishop, "we greet you well; and joy to behold that, though no longer able to lead the armies of the church, you come, in your christian zeal, to partake in her councils."—"I come," replied De Monfort, rejecting the hand which the bishop extended towards him, half in greeting, half in benediction, and supporting himself on his sword, "I come, lord bishop, not to partake of your councils, but to maintain my right—that hath been wrested from me in mine involuntary absence, and in the forged and false belief of mine infirmity."—"Forged belief!" repeated the bishop, crossing himself, as he retreated in well-dissembled amaze, and glancing a look of hypocritical compassion around. "Alas! my lords, he trembles as he speaks."

"If I tremble, it is with rage, not weakness, injurious prelate," said De Monfort. "But I see thy crafty aim: thou knowest mine hot ungoverned humour, and wouldst urge me to some wild speech or fierce act, that might work me dishonour in the eyes of this fair assembly."—"An I do not ere the day be done," said the bishop internally, "I will exchange my mitre for a coxcomb."—"Fair assembly," cried the Dauphin,* hotly breaking in on the conference, "and fair example in truth—where proud

* The title of Dauphin was not assumed by the eldest sons of France till, I believe, the year 1343—more than a century after the period of this tale; but it is ascribed by Shakespeare to Prince Lewis in the play of King John, and "*quid non ego homuncio!*"

subjects meet to debate on the rights of princes to lead their own liege vassals to battle!

"Boy!—princely boy!" said the veteran chief, with hollow voice and tremulous action; "I saw thee take the noble rank of knight at Compeigne on the feast of Pentecost, from the hand of thy royal father Philip: I heard thee sworn to *l'amour de Dieu et des Dames*."

"And I am a heretic," said Sir Aymer, half audibly, "if his highness fulfil not one part of his vow to the letter."

"I was thy sponsor," continued De Monfort, extending his wrinkled hand, "at the font which a true knight holds sacred as that of his baptism; and could I deem, when the spur was buckled on thy heel, and the sword first girded on thy stripling's thigh, that thou, my *damoiseau*, my royal *varlet*,* wouldst ever draw it in quarrel against thy godfather-in-arms?"

Prince Lewis, touched by the recollection, was silent for a moment. The bishop of Toulouse saw there was not a moment to be lost: "and were it so," he cried, "what avails thy tale of Compeigne and feasts of Pentecost? Does that give thee a title to usurp the Dauphin's power, and make thy liege thy vassal? What right dost thou pretend to in this fair assembly higher than that of other loyal peers of France?—of me, for instance, or of the nobles who surround us?"—"What right?" cried De Monfort: "is the question asked in jest, or in scorn? I claim the command of the armies of the church (as thou well knowest, lord bishop) by commission from thy master the Pope himself."—"The holy father," said the bishop, "was deceived by false reports, palliating, if not concealing thine infirmity of health, and other causes that render such appointment null."—"Other causes!" cried De Monfort, biting his lip to repress his choler: "I claim it by consent, yea, by

* Terms in chivalry applied to the knights probationers.

command, of King Philip of France.”—“ He will revoke that consent,” said Prince Lewis, “ when he knows it prejudicial alike to the interests of the church and the honour of his son.”—“ I claim it, then, in right of *this*,” cried De Monfort, striking his gauntleted hand on his sword, the blow making the paved floor of the church ring again : “ and if that plea avail not,” he added, with somewhat a tremor in his voice, “ by these, and these, and these;” and he pointed proudly to the numerous wounds that his armour concealed, but under whose effect he was still evidently suffering.—“ Tell also where those wounds were received,” said the bishop, tauntingly. “ Even in that wild battle to which thou led’st the chivalry of France in thy pride, and where its flower fell—the victims of thy mad counsel.”—“ God’s malison on thee, thou proud prelate!” cried De Monfort, yielding to his choler; “ art thou, too, turned mine enemy? Ere I came hither, men told me the Dauphin and thou were well nigh hurling your daggers at each other’s heads in deadly wrath, and do ye now join together to bait me with your injuries and reproaches?”—“ I sought and obtained the pardon of the holy prelate,” said Lewis, somewhat suddenly, “ for mine unadvised speech.”—“ My royal son,” said the bishop, with more graceful dissimulation, “ it was won ere it was asked.” De Monfort shook his head, as he viewed them both with a stern but expressive smile,—“ Prince and prelate, crafty as ye are, and crafty ye are as the fiend himself, ye do not deceive me; ye cannot by your hollow truce deceive these lords, who were witnesses but now to your deadly feud, and all but mortal strife. Peers, and knights of France,” he cried, “ will you march under divided counsels and unfriendly leaders, or under the sole and faithful guidance of him ye once named your Maccabee?” And the voice of the veteran, weakened by infirmity and emotion, faltered again: not so the thousand

voices that shouted, "A De Monfort!—à De Monfort!" in answer.

"An we make not in to the rescue, the field is lost," whispered the bishop to Prince Lewis:—"Out on thee," he thundered aloud, "thou bloody chief! Thy cruelties have stained the cause of the church, and brought defeat and disgrace on our arms!"—"Dissembling priest!" cried de Monfort kindling, "dost *thou* name cruelty?—thou, who at the sack of Lavaur didst chaunt the *Veni Creator*, with thy clergy, to the shrieks of four hundred heretics perishing in the flames!"*—"Their crime merited such punishment," interposed the bishop; "but thy cruelties were wanton as they were needless—the fruits of thy dark and bloody soul. Remember the foul assassination of the count of Beziers!—heretic as he was, he was thy prisoner, entrusted to thine honour!"—"The murder of the lady of Lavaur!" cried Lewis, "flung by thine order or thy hand into a pit, and whelmed with stones—the murder of a noble lady, thou stain to chivalry!"—"Thy sworn and solemn truce with the Count de Foix, ordained by the council of Lateran, violated in wanton perfidy!" exclaimed the bishop.—"Nor is thy perfidy less than thy pride!" continued Lewis, "*Simon en nom, et roi en faict.*"†—"And thy rapacity surpassing both!" pursued the bishop, giving him no rest: "thou, who didst force the heiress of Bigorre from the arms of her wedded and rightful lord, and compel to espouse thy son, that ye might seize and share her ample dower!"

At this detail of the well-known enormities of Count Simon, a murmur spread even among his own train; and those who had hitherto stood nearest him, began, as in shame, to fall from his side.

De Monfort looked round him with a wild and

* Vide Velly, Vol. iii. for this and what follows, and Perrin, *passim*.

† The expressions applied to De Monfort by Philip Augustus, when complaining of him to the Pope.

vacant glare: his passions, always violent, in this desperate moment of shame and anguish utterly overpowered his reason; a kind of delirium seized him, and unsheathing his dagger, while he shouted "A De Monfort! à De Monfort!" he rushed to where Prince Lewis stood. The movement was so rapid and unlooked for, that the blow, though aimed by the hand of a madman, might have been fatal, had not a young knight thrown himself between De Monfort and the Dauphin, and received it himself. It pierced between the joints of the vantbrace to his shoulder, and the blood burst from the wound.

At sight of the blood, which all believed to be that of the prince, a cry of consternation and horror burst from the whole assembly: shouts of "Treason! treason!" and "Make fast the gates!" resounded on every side, and all parties hastened to gather round the Dauphin. In the tumult, the attendants of De Monfort found means to bear him away, still struggling, but exhausted; and his band of knights and followers, unable to justify the outrage they had witnessed with horror, departed to a man.

"I will after him on the instant," cried the bishop to Prince Lewis; "and, while his blood is warm, I will paint to him his guilt in such horrors as shall make him deem the concession of his claim but light atonement for such deadly crime."—"After him, then, my noble friend," answered the Dauphin, "and St. Denis to speed!" Then as the bishop departed with his train, "False priest!" he murmured, "I trust thee as I love thee; but where is the youth who preserved me from the arm of that mad assassin?" he cried, looking round him.—"Here, my liege," answered a youthful voice; while the speaker, making low obeisance, and raising his casque, disclosed the features of Sir Amiral.

Lewis recoiled, as if stung by an adder: he recovered himself, however, sufficiently to wave the knights who surrounded him to a distance: then in a hurried voice, "How now!" he said, "so soon

returned?"—"In most happy time, my liege, did I return to meet the peril that menaced your grace."—"And you found the tower of Hugo empty?" cried Lewis, though Amiralcl had not said so.—"As empty," answered the youth with emphasis, "as your grace's promise of safe conduct and honourable usage for my hapless companion."—"Sir boy," said Lewis, haughtily, "presume not; on the slight service thou hast rendered us, to deem that we will brook such look or language from a subject: but I see whence this strange boldness springs—thou lovest this errant damsel thyself. 'Tis well: and so thou provest thy loyalty as knight, by upbraiding thy prince; and thy faith as crusader, by daring to love a heretic. Thou wouldst marry her too, I warrant, in thy romance of honourable love. Now, by St. Denis, I will keep the damsel in my custody, were it but to prevent such foul disgrace to the Church's cause."—"It will be more dishonoured, prince," replied the youth, "when a helpless and lonely maiden is the victim of a crusader's violence and wrong."

"Avoid my presence!" said Lewis, stamping, "lest *she* prove not mine *only* victim, as thou dardest to term it. By Heaven, I am well schooled between a hoary ruffian and a beardless stripling! Hold—stay—come back," he cried, as the youth, giving him a look that subjects sometimes can give, and princes sometimes must bear, was retiring,—“Come back, I say.” Then with a struggle between pride and fear, “I doubt not thou wilt make this mad love of thine an excuse for deserting the cause of thy prince.”—"No, my liege," answered the youth with a melancholy firmness; "my sovereign's forgetting his duty can never absolve his subject. I will fight beneath thy standard with a wrung, but loyal heart; and though in the anguish of my soul I think you a tyrant, and dare tell you so, never will I whisper such a sound in another ear, or brook to hear it from

another lip.”—“Shame, shame,” cried Sir Aymer, who had ventured to linger near, “that such faith should meet such guerdon! Call him back, call him back, my liege. How can a son of France bear to be outdone in honour by his liege-man?”

“Royal lord,” cried Amirald, returning uncalled, and bending his knee to Lewis, “be generous, and restore the maiden.”—“Prince,” said Sir Aymer, with unusual spirit—“prince, be just, and wrong not her who saved thy mother’s life.”

Lewis struggled for a moment with his passions; but, though he could conceive, he had not mental strength to realize their subjection, and, rending his mantle from the grasp of Sir Aymer, he exclaimed, “No, I cannot—by Heaven, I cannot resign her!” and rushed away.—“Courage yet,” cried Sir Aymer: “if she is between Heaven and earth, she shall be found; and if found, restored.”

Meanwhile, Genevieve had been conveyed by her conductors to a detached and secluded apartment in the lodgings occupied by the Prince and his immediate attendants in the town. Though Lewis resolved to employ only persuasion with his prisoner, he could not carry his generosity farther; but determined, at every risk, to keep her concealed from Sir Amirald. In the mean while he availed himself of every opportunity, which the stormy debates of the Crusaders allowed him, to visit her,—employing all the eloquence of passion and of power, and in violent importunity even prostrating himself before her; her beauty, purity, and unprotected helplessness, alternately urging and disarming him. These visits were the only interruption to her solitude.

It was on the fourth evening of her confinement, that at a late hour the door of her apartment was burst open, and Prince Lewis rushed in; his visage inflamed, and his hair and robes deranged, as if from the consequences of a personal struggle. He gazed on her, and then striking his forehead with an ago-

nizing expression of self-reproach, he exclaimed : " Come with me this moment, maiden—if, indeed, a moment yet be left thee !"—" And whither must I now go ?" said Genevieve, as she rose and stood trembling before him.—" Stay not to ask—stay not to speak," he cried ; " a moment's delay may cost thy life !"—" My life !" she said, with a faint smile—" is that all ? Then, Sir Knight, I quit not this spot : " but her heart recoiling as she spoke, " And am I, indeed, to perish, and so soon ?" she said : " and cannot even Sir Amirald save me ?"

" Sir Amirald save thee—thee whom a son of France is unable to rescue even for an hour !" exclaimed Lewis. " Frantic and obstinate girl, hear and believe thy peril and *my* shame :—I was this night at a feast held by the Bishop of Toulouse ; a feast of reconciliation he termed it—aught but that was in his fiendish thoughts. As we sat, tidings came that some of the most potent lords in Languedoc were taking arms in defence of their vassals, amongst whom the cursed heresy of thy people rages. At the word, every sword sprang from its sheath, every eye was fixed on me, every tongue hailed me champion of the Church—the title for which I would have forfeited life—for which I had well nigh lost it to De Monfort. But even De Monfort ceded his claim ; the bishop employed his only to strengthen mine. I believed him all sincere ; but the subtle and bloody prelate had been dealing deeply with the Crusaders. He hates thee deadly, maiden, I know not wherefore ; he had sworn them to a man : I shame to tell thee, their absurd and savage superstition required that I should yield thee up to perish ere a knight would stand by my banner : they assailed, they implored ; they beset me, inflamed as I was with wine, intoxicated with power, and I"—" Yielded," said Genevieve, fixing on him her mild dark eyes. " Alas ! Sir Knight ; and to honour, to humanity, thou wouldst not yield me, and to the first

call of mad and selfish ambition, 'I am doomed to be the sacrifice !'—"No, by Heaven, maiden," cried Lewis ; " scarce had the mad words passed my lips when I retracted them : through menace, through injury, through indignity that I blush to have survived, I burst from their accursed feast. Two of the faithfullest of my train still guard the postern, and will make good the passage with their lives, while I bear thee to some safer retreat, where their ruthless and brutal rage shall be matter of scorn to us. Maiden," he cried, watching her moveless features, fixed in horror at the thought—"maiden, for thee a son of France has forgotten his rank, his rights, himself ; and dost thou dare to hesitate who hast nothing to risk ? But thou shalt not be allowed the choice."—"Prince," said Genevieve, retreating as he approached her,—“prince, thou gavest thine oath but yesterday, in mercy to my terrors, that I should suffer no further violence at thy hands : I claim that oath now ; and as thou hast pledged thine immortal soul, and valuest the pledge, redeem it, and leave me to die.”—"And thou, so young, so fair, so gentle," said Lewis, gazing on her with mingled feelings of admiration and agony,—“canst thou brave death—such death as they may prepare for thee ?”—“It will be but a few moments of brief torture,” said Genevieve hurriedly ; “and then—but a few moments indeed,” she cried—“I hear them approaching :” and already a tumultuous band was heard surrounding the apartment which we have described as detached, and to which Prince Lewis’s flight had pointed their way. Some of them bore torches, and the voice of Sir Ambrose was heard among them, fiercely exclaiming, “Let us burn the heretic harlot with fire,” as, with unappeasable rancour against Genevieve, he led the intoxicated party on ; while some began to hurl their torches towards the roof, too plainly indicating their horrible purpose. “Dogs, devils as they are,” cried Prince Lewis in fury, “they dare not do such out-

rage!"—and he tore open the casement: the flashes of light came thicker and brighter through it.—“Oh! save me, save me!” cried Genevieve, with an involuntary shriek of horror at the prospect of her fearful doom. “But it must be,” she said, the heart’s dew of agony bursting from every pore of her pale brow—“but it must be! Away, for God’s sake, away, lest thou too share my dreadful death!”—“Saints and angels! and canst thou reject life—love—a prince’s love, to embrace a fate so horrible? The postern is guarded by our friends: this moment I will bear thee through it; but I cannot alone encounter those hounds of hell.”—“And *I must*,” said Genevieve, with a ghastly smile: “it will be but a few moments,—a brief agony—better, far better than a life of shame. Away, Prince Lewis, save thy royal life; and if he thou callest Amiral should name me hereafter, tell him I perished unstained and true.”—“Thou shalt not perish,” cried Lewis, with his most tremendous oath, “*Par le sang des Rois*; in thine own despite I will save thee.”—“Amid those cruel men,” cried Genevieve, springing from him, “would I rather fling this frail body, than into arms like thine. I shudder at mine horrible death; but I shudder more at thee.”—“They must have the power as well as the malignity of the great fiend, if they dare to oppose me,” cried Lewis, rushing from the apartment; and wrapping his mantle round his left arm, he flung himself among the assailants. Genevieve looked from the casement: she saw him stagger, sink in the heat and struggle, and borne off insensible.

The chamber was constructed of wood: the roof was already in a blaze, and the burning fragments of the timber were dropping around her. She retreated from them as they fell; but the floor began also to burn, and the shouts or rather yells of her persecutors deepened in her ears. She retreated to the centre of the chamber, but the heat there was suffocat-

ing. She sank on the floor ; but started from it, as it scorched her. " Oh ! " she cried, as the volumes of smoke rolled towards her—" Oh that they might choke me at once, that this horrid agony might be over ! Oh, what those suffer who perish in flames ! " she cried, as she attempted to fly from place to place, while the flames gathered strength : but every where the burning touch, the suffocating smoke, repelled her. Her senses gave way ; the last distinct impression she retained, was that of sinking into a profound sleep, from which the voice of Amiral tried in vain to arouse her.

CHAPTER XIII.

Come round me, my thousands!

OSSIAN.

THE report which had reached the Crusaders at the feast held by the Bishop of Toulouse, was true. Some of the most powerful lords in Languedoc, among whom were foremost the Counts de Foix and de Comminges, had risen in aid of the Albigeois, and threatened to oppose a formidable barrier to the progress of the Crusaders. Those two lords had been the intimate friends of the Count of Toulouse: they had even had the courage to accompany him to Rome, and advocate his cause before the Pope; but latterly revolted by his imbecile and fluctuating character, incensed by the spoliation of their territories and the slaughter of their vassals, and in fact jealous and trembling for their own diminished wealth and power; after despatching respectful embassies to the Pope, to justify the measures they declared themselves compelled to, they bade their banners fly, and summoned the Albigeois to seek protection beneath them. The first measure they adopted was to seize on some city, which they proposed to fortify, and collecting their troops there, to offer shelter to all the Albigeois who were disposed to avail themselves of it, thus putting an end to the desultory and uneventful warfare which had been hitherto carried on, and assuming a position alike cognizable by friends and enemies. Their standards were soon followed by a numerous band of men-at-arms, and by what the historian terms, '*une foule incroyable*' of the Albigeois, who abandoned by Count Raymond, sought where they could for safety and for life.

These measures were concerted and acted on with such expedition, that the intelligence reached the Crusaders only at the moment of its execution. The place they had fixed on was the worst they could

select—the city of Tarascon. It was in the neighbourhood of Beaucaire, from which the Bishop of Toulouse could always detach a considerable force against it: it was also commanded by a fortified castle beyond the walls of the town; an edifice spacious enough to contain a host, and strong enough itself to stand a siege the fiercest that that age could lay. The town had been among the first to yield to De Montfort when he overran the territories of the Count of Toulouse in his first rapid career of conquest, and was now held for the Crusaders by Lambert de Limons, a brave and experienced warrior; but his garrison was feeble, the fortifications of the town were equally so, and the houses wholly undefended; for at that period the privilege of having their houses fortified belonged exclusively to the bourgeois of Toulouse and Avignon—a privilege for which they had often paid sufficiently dear. This circumstance, perhaps, determined the inauspicious choice of the leaders of this new army, believing that Tarascon would be an easy prey, but in their march thither they were fated to encounter circumstances still more inauspicious. They were themselves rigid Catholics—so were the men-at-arms they led. The wandering bands of the Albigeois collecting from every quarter, and especially from Toulouse, from which the Count's vacillating creed had once more expelled them, were tenacious of the new faith, and fierce and even bloody contest arose on their progress between the protectors and the protected. The leaders could hardly venture to interfere to check this; and when they did, their interference was repelled by a reference to their mutual creed on the part of their followers.—‘Dogs of heretics!’ they cried, ‘we well deserve such reproach for aiding their cause.’ And this was followed not only by increasingly injurious treatment of the Albigeois, but by mutinous murmurs against their leaders. Meanwhile this unhappy people, no less persecuted than persecuting, were perpetually

at war among themselves; for every division and subdivision of opinion was now developed among the multitudes that assembled in every direction,—emigrants from Beaucaire, Toulouse, Nismes, and every place supposed to be infected with heresy; and in the intervals of abuse that they plentifully received from the troops of the Counts de Foix and de Comminges, they employed themselves in as liberally bestowing it on each other; and the terms Petro-brusiens, Henriciens, Catharins, and Patarins, never ceased among the unhappy and distracted multitude; every man upbraiding his comrade and fellow-sufferer, and then making common cause against the catholic troops, who assailed them in turn, and never failed to pay the interest of their debt of sharp words with heavy blows, till the whole band presented the appearance of a mutinous, disarrayed and disorganized multitude, fiercely hating and assailing each other, accordingly as words or blows might predominate.

The winter had expired, and an early and favourable spring had commenced, when this party, of whose march intelligence, as we have told had reached Toulouse, was approaching the city of Tarascon; and their leaders, anticipating a temporary cessation of their differences, on their arrival at this seat of mutual shelter and defence, urged on their progress with the utmost haste. On their approach, however, to Tarascon, they were struck by the tranquil, defenceless appearance of the city, and halted for a short consultation. They knew the well-proved courage and military skill of Lambert de Limons, who held the town for the Crusaders, and paused to consider whether some danger was not to be dreaded from this singular tranquillity. Their debates were broken in upon by the clamours of the men-at-arms, who were anxious for plunder, and the Albigeois, who were still more anxious for food, of which their military companions had appropriated so large a proportion during their march, that their situation

resembled more that of men besieged by enemies than protected by friends. The leaders consented to the demand, rather than petition, of their tumultuous army; and despatched a band of fifty archers, flanked by as many men-at-arms—all of them expert, chosen men—to reconnoitre the approaches of the town. They returned in safety, but their report was sufficiently mysterious and unsatisfactory; and when the Counts de Foix and de Comminges put their forces in motion, and approached the town, singular as it was, they found it verified. Not a banner waved on the walls—not a warder stood on tower or bartizan—not a horn was blown from the gates—the town had no moat, save on one side, and the gates lay open in silent and portentous invitation.

All that day the army lay before the walls, but it seemed as a city of the dead. As evening fell, the impetuosity of the troops would no longer be restrained: the leaders yielded to it, and the whole army burst into the city, followed fast by the Albigeois. Streets, houses, churches, square, and citadel, were all empty; nor man nor beast was to be found wherever they might turn. The earth returned nothing but the sound of their own steps—the air nothing but the echo of their own voices. There was now no restraining the troops; they wandered, pillaged, ravaged, and revelled through every street in Tarascon; and ample booty was there to excite and satiate their cupidity. Rich garments, household stuff and plate, appeared displayed in ostentatious profusion; and with these the men-at-arms hasted to equip themselves, appearing in their new and multifarious array something like Trinculo and Stephano in their stolen robes, while the spirit which laid the glittering bait was waiting to pursue and punish them for the trespass. The half famished Albigeois betook themselves to the provisions that they found spread with equal and mysterious plenty in the empty houses; and ere

night fell, all had feasted on the viands, and arrayed themselves in the garments they found in the deserted city.

Meanwhile the Counts de Foix and Comminges had drawn their immediate band of knights and gentlemen into the citadel; and still not wholly unsuspicious of some treachery, they searched every apartment and passage, till at length they conceived themselves sufficiently safe; and, finding rich viands and costly wines in the citadel, they sat down to banquet at their leisure. Their spirits rose as they feasted and drank; they pledged each other deeply; and, in pride of their strange and sudden achievement of the possession of the town of Tarascon, were clasping each other's hands at every pledge, when a trumpet was blown on the sudden, and an armed knight rushed in almost along with the sound. The Count de Foix and his companion started up at the intrusion, believing it to be some knight of their train. The stranger raised his visor, and disclosed a face which both of them remembered to have beheld, but neither could clearly recollect where.

'I am to crave your pardon, lords,' said the youthful knight, 'for mine intrusion; and next, to announce tidings of high concernment!'—'Thy tidings should indeed be of importance to justify such intrusion. Speak, then!' said De Foix, standing with his hand on his dagger as he spoke.—'Thine employers have sent but a weak instrument to sound their challenge,' said Comminges.—'Then hear it to-morrow from the trumpets of the Crusaders,' said the youth, 'who ere dawn will invest your towers! Such are my tidings; brook them how ye list.'

De Foix and De Comminges started to their feet. 'These be stirring tidings indeed!' exclaimed the former. 'And where gottest thou them? and what be thy credentials—thy pledger?'—'My life!' said the youth with proud confidence: 'I have

placed that in your hands; and as ye find me to have spoken the truth, so deal with me. The army of the Crusaders is on its march; they will be beneath your walls to-morrow; and hang me from the highest turret of your citadel, if by dawn ye find not my tidings, which I have risked life to bear, true!"—
 'And who art thou that bearest such tidings? and who commissioned thee to bear them?' said De Foix.—
 'Ay, ask him that!' said De Comminges.—
 'My lords,' said the young knight, 'I must say that the reception I have met with is lacking, not only in noble courtesy, but in the wisdom I might seek in chiefs like you. I bear you tidings of high import—I pledge my life on their truth—and ye seek my name and title? If that be warrantage, I tell ye, peers of France, that I have right to the *cri d'armes*,* being a knight banneret, knighted by your liege sovereign and mine, King Philip, on the field of battle.'

De Foix and De Comminges whispered together, and looked at him as they whispered. 'Wast thou not one of that godless band,' said De Foix, 'who wore the cross on their breast, but trampled it under their feet?'—
 'I have transferred it from my breast to my heart,' said Amiral; 'and there I trust it will remain.'

'And what motive hast thou for such change?' said De Foix suspectingly. 'We rise in aid of our despoiled vassals, our ravaged territories; but thou, a landless, birthless youth, to all seeming—what motive hath urged thee to such enterprise?'—
 'My lords,' said the youth blushing, his youthful grace and modest mien making strong contrast with the half-recumbent posture, scowling brow, and flushed but stern visage of the querist, 'my lords, is this noble:—is it generous to press on a stranger's private thoughts? Believe it, that the motive must

* 'Une autre distinction des *bannerets* étoit d'avoir *cry d'armes*.' Velly, vol. iv.

have been powerful that could produce such change: I will say no more.'

'If thine intelligence be true,' said De Foix, 'thou canst tell us how the Crusaders have marshalled their array?'—'De Montfort,' replied Amiral, 'hath marshalled them in three bands, in honour of the Holy Trinity: the Dauphin leads the centre, the Bishop of Toulouse the left wing, and De Montfort himself the right.' De Foix and his companions interchanged looks, as if their suspicions began to be removed. 'But, lords, my tidings are not yet told: a powerful ally, as well as a fierce enemy is in the field—Count Raymond of Toulouse is marching hither.'—'Sir stranger knight,' said De Comminges, 'thou taskest our credulity too far. Know we not that Raymond of Toulouse is paying his devotions before the doors of every church in his territories—because he dares not enter them? and causing prayers to be said for his reconciliation with the holy father?'—'And know ye not also the holy father's answer to his last embassy: *'Mon fils, écoutez-moi, aimez Dieu sur toute chose, ne prenez jamais les Biens d'autrui; mais défendez le votre, si quelqu'un veut vous l'enlever;'** and that, on the faith of that message, Count Raymond is already at the head of a potent army, and making towards Tarascon with his utmost speed?'—'This seems like truth,' said De Foix.—'Seems,' cried Amiral. 'Now, by Heaven, lords, I will no longer brook these wrongs: trust me, or slay me on the spot!'

De Foix was about to return a fierce answer, and Comminges to interpose, when a loud tumult was heard at the entrance, and some of De Foix's attendants rushed in, dragging, or rather carrying among them the ghastly figure of a man apparently wasted by disease, but who neither offered resistance, nor attempted supplication. 'My lord,' they

* These words were addressed by Pope Honorius, I believe; to the son of Count Raymond.

cried, in answer to the questions eagerly hurried on them, 'we found this fellow concealed in a private passage near this chamber; we have brought him hither, and perchance he can tell the cause of this city's strange abandonment, and why, of the thousands that swarmed here but two days past, he alone was found, and found concealed.'—'Speak, fellow, for thy life!' said de Foix, turning fiercely on the ghastly wretch.—'My life!—not for that,' said the prisoner, with an energy of voice and manner singularly contrasted with the squalid debility of his appearance: 'but I *will* speak, and ye shall find my words are true as the words of the dying are ever. Lambert de Limons the governor of the town, withdrew his garrison from these walls on the report of your approach, and he hath thrown himself into the castle of Tarascon, which he purposes to hold for the Crusaders, whose arrival he expects by to-morrow's dawn.'—'This confirms the stranger knight's report,' said de Comminges.—'It needed not *such* confirmation,' said Amiral with some disdain.—'And the inhabitants of the town?' said De Foix.—'They dispersed on the garrison's being withdrawn.'—'And wherefore didst thou tarry here alone?'—'I was unable to follow them; and if I were, it was my wish to stay: my reasons you will know ere long,' replied the prisoner, with an expression somewhat sinister.—'Hast thou aught else to disclose?' said De Foix.—'Tidings that should be welcome to you, noble lords,' said the man with a portentous smile: 'and yet methinks you will scarce have heart to welcome them when they are fulfilled.'—'Tell them plainly,' said De Foix; 'and forbear, if thou canst, that leer that suits so ill the features of a dying wretch like thee.'—'Men say,' answered the prisoner, 'that Raymond of Toulouse is marching hither; and that the incarnate fiend, in form of a knight in sable armour, fights by his side. However that be, Lambert de Limons thought better, with his small garrison, to maintain the castle than

the town, whose defences were destroyed when Simon de Montfort won it from the Count of Toulouse.'—'Sir Stranger knight,' said De Foix eagerly, 'we cry you mercy for our unseasonable mistrust, and gladly accept the proffered aid of your arms and counsel.'

Amirald took the hand of the Count, who accompanied his words with the suitable action, and grasped it with an energy that made him feel the pledge was given for life and death. His finely modulated temper, like a piece composed by some skilful musician, admitted a passing discord for a moment, only to swell and enrich the succeeding harmony, 'Now, my lords,' he said, 'shall we not set forth by to-morrow's dawn? A *sortie* from these towers would at least check the Crusaders; and if we succeeded in turning their flanks, perchance by that time the army of Raymond of Toulouse may arrive, and thus they will be enclosed between two fires. A *sortie*, noble lords, by the dawn, and I will yield to the first lance levelled against me, an' we do not win the day against De Montfort and his triple host, were they trebled again.'—'Sir stranger knight, thou sayest well,' answered De Foix; 'but our men-at-arms are now scattered through the town in quest of pillage. We will summon them back on the instant: they have, I warrant me, scarce left a meal untasted or a garment untried in the town. They must be recalled to their standards within the hour, and by dawn we charge from these walls.'—'Is it true,' said the prisoner, 'that your troops have partaken of the food, and clothed themselves with the garments they found within these walls?' No one heeded him; while the Count De Foix loudly issued his orders for recalling the men-at-arms from their dispersion through the town. The prisoner then repeated his demand in a hollow voice, but with an expression of eagerness indescribable. 'And dost thou ask, fellow,' said De Foix, issuing orders, —'dost thou ask whether men-at-arms will seize

on the spoil of a deserted town; or whether the starved Albigensis will not snatch a meal where he can find it?'—As he spoke, his back was to the prisoner, but he suddenly turned on hearing a wild and fierce shriek of exultation:—'Then are they death-doomed every man, did each possess the strength of an hundred giants! The town was visited by the plague; Lambert de Limons withdrew his garrison in terror; and the infected and unprotected inhabitants wandered where they might: but they left behind them pledges of their good-will towards their expected guests. Every morsel that ye have tasted is death—every garment that ye have but touched is deadly as mortal poison. Now rejoice at the speedy succour of Count Raymond. Ha, ha! he will be greeted by your livid corpses: or by your spirits parting in torture: and I—I remained alone to tell the enemies of God their fate, and to die.' The breathless silence that followed this terrible communication was itself as terrible. It did not, however, continue long. 'Die, then! accursed fiend,' cried De Foix with an ungovernable impulse of fury and horror: and he plunged his dagger to the hilt in the body of the prisoner, who fell without a groan. He fell on his face; but in a few moments, by convulsive exertions, he turned himself on his back as he lay, and tearing open his garment, pointed to the livid spots on his breast, and, glaring at his murderer, with an unutterable smile, expired.

Amirald, who like the rest had stood dumb and stupified with horror, now felt a sting of agonizing consciousness thrill through frame and soul, and striking his forehead, and uttering with a sob of despair the single word 'Genevieve,' he rushed from the apartment. On his reaching the citadel that disastrous night, he had placed her under the care of his two 'squires (to which his retinue was now diminished) in the antechamber, while he passed on to impart his tidings, and offer his aid to the leaders. There he now found her seated, in a re-

tired nook, with her veil folded round her, silently shrinking from the rude gaze of the armed attendants of the count, as they hastily traversed the chamber. He stood some moments in irresolute agony; but when, at length beholding her young protector again, she rose, and with a sweet and timid confidence extended her arms towards him, he thought his heart would burst: he rushed towards her, and in a brief and shuddering whisper communicated the terrible intelligence of their danger.

Genevieve for a moment trembled, and recoiled in natural horror; but in the next she said, in a voice tremulous indeed, but which announced invincible resolution, 'Then I will seek my poor old father, and we will perish together.' It was in vain that Amiral, with all the agony of a lover, expostulated, implored, and finally menaced to detain her. 'Thou wilt not use force,' she said with resolute mildness; 'and to naught but force will I yield in this thing. Noble knight, gentle friend,' she added, 'withstand me not; I will not be counselled.'

Amiral adjured her by her only chance for safety, to remain in the citadel, as she was yet free from infection, having neither tasted the food nor touched the raiment since her arrival.

As he pleaded, some of the more respectable of the Albigeois came to solicit the protection of the Counts against the tyranny and rapacity of the men-at-arms, who were taking from them their provisions, and otherwise abusing and plundering them. As these men struggled through the tumultuous and insulting opposition of the men-at-arms who crowded the apartment, a voice was heard exclaiming, 'Smite me not, I pray thee! I am old and blind, and lack a guide to aid me.' Genevieve sprang forward at the sound, and in a moment locked her arms round the neck of the aged Pierre, and sobbed in mingled joy and agony on his breast: while the old man, recognizing her in the same moment, held her to his heart with a sense of pleasure so oppres-

sive and overpowering that it was almost converted into pain. The others who filled the apartment were unfit spectators of such a scene: they gazed incuriously for a time, and then began to utter coarse jests on the meeting, till Amirald forced his way among them, and fiercely repelled the rude circle. But such was the tumult and distraction in the citadel of Tarascon, the tidings of infection spreading fast, that it was only by dint of manual force, seconded by that of his 'squires, that the knight succeeded in securing a small and remote chamber in the citadel for Genevieve and the pastor; where he left his attendants to protect them, and hastened back to take part in the troubled and distracted councils of the Counts de Foix and de Comminges during the short remainder of that dreary night.

Meanwhile the pastor and his daughter sat in their still, remote chamber in a state of pure delight, which not even the sense of near and mortal danger could disturb. The thought made their meeting solemn, but not sad. 'And why dost thou quit my side, Genevieve?' said the old man, extending his arms towards her.—'It was to bring the lamp nearer my father.'—'But I can feel thee without it.'—'But I cannot see you, my father, in this dusky chamber filled with arms. Alas! how you are changed, my father!'—'Regard it not, my child, but haste to tell me all that hath befallen thee, and how thou hast been restored to me; for my heart forebodes that, surrounded as we are by pestilence and war, these are the last and only moments in which it will be allowed me to listen to thy voice, and to feel thy hands in mine.'

Genevieve began her tale, but often paused, palliated, and omitted when the theme was her own danger. But it was observable even to Pierre, that when the name of Sir Amirald mingled in her story, her voice became free, her language fluent and unhesitating, and her narrative most minute and circumstantial. She told of her deliverance from the

flames by *him*, who, at the risk of his life, had borne her through them; and then, almost unaided, charged on her persecutors with one arm, while he sustained his senseless burthen in the other. In her narrative she could not but contrast the daring courage and faithful love of Amiralde with the selfish and violent passion of the Dauphin, who had persecuted her while in his power, and abandoned her to her horrible fate when he found his interest with the Crusaders was compromised by her presence. 'But, oh! my father, hadst thou seen him—his noble daring, his gentle courage! It would be worth a miracle to restore thy sight, were it but to view that form so lovely and noble.'—'But, my child,' said the old man, 'it was of thee I wished to hear: what is the comely favour of that youth to me? Go on, my daughter: he guided thee to Toulouse (as thou saidst was thy intendment) in safety and honour?'—'Alas! yes, my father: but when I arrived there, all things were changed. Our kinswoman Merab, with whom I hoped to sojourn, had obeyed the new injunctions of Count Raymond, and professed the ancient faith: the count himself assisted at mass, and enjoined it on all his subjects during his negotiation with the Pope. Our kinswoman was a widow with many children: she gazed for a space on the gems I offered her to shelter me; but then she looked at her children, and averting her head that she might not see me, pointed to the open door. I was then a wanderer in the streets of Toulouse: and oh! how I rejoiced to find that the most powerful feeling of my persecutors was their avarice! But my ransom soon left me poor; for when Sir Amiralde bore me from that burning chamber, I left in a cabinet, where I had hid them, the most costly jewels of the queen's gift. It was darkling when I sheltered me within the shadow of a church where they were singing mass or vespers. Soon a glare of torches flashed on me where I lay concealed, and I saw the powerful preacher, the mighty warrior Mat-

tathias, borne from judgment to the prison, there to abide his doom; for Count Raymond had resolved to sacrifice to the Pope's demands the chief among his once highly favoured Albigeois. The torches, held by some ghastly wretches, blazed in the front of the procession, and then came Mattathias. He was to be consigned to prison for two days; and if within that period he did not submit to the ancient faith, he was to be burnt with fire. As he passed me, his stern and ghastly features spoke aught but faith or hope: they had that fixed expression that spoke not spiritual, but physical power; not the zeal of the martyr, but the strength of the man. 'I always judged him what thou hast spoken him,' said Pierre: 'and moreover he was the cause of thy banishment from the congregation. He rent the last green leaf from the sapless trunk—he quenched the light of the blind. I have tried to forgive him, and I have sometimes thought I had done so; but I dared not search my heart. Yet fear not thou, my child; there are none now to oppose return. Boanerges is now a mighty warrior clad in mail: and Amand——' 'Oh, what of him?' said Genevieve fearfully.—'Didst thou love him, my child, that thou speakest with such earnestness?'—'Alas! no, my father; but we sometimes dread more to hear the fate of those who hated, than of those who have loved us.'—'He wandered about among us, after thy departure, heavy and silent: a bad and restless spirit seemed to be at work within him. On our way hither, he disappeared; and no one knows what hath befallen him—no one, methinks, inquired. But tell me, my child, the end of the hard-hearted and hard-fated Mattathias.'—'Oh, my father, it was fearful. I sought him in his prison, near his last moments, and then the faith for which he had been so zealous failed! He doubted that he had ever believed. The soul tried to drop her anchor, but found no bottom; and went on drifting her dim and stormy way, almost a wreck. He called on me to

join him in prayer and hymns. I sang and prayed, but he said there was no meaning in the sounds; and then to see his fixed ghastly eyes, the cold drops on his forehead, and his strong frame heaving with its throes, like a mountain moved by an earthquake! His pride upheld him, and he died the death of a martyr, but without a martyr's faith or hope. To my dying hour never can I forget his.' Pierre shuddered at the awful picture. 'But my fears were soon awakened for myself. My visits to the prison were watched; there was no safety then in Toulouse for those of our faith; and again I owed my deliverance to the care and valour of Sir Amiral. But when I had escaped from the city, and my protector asked where I was about to direct my flight, I looked around me and on him in mute and utter helplessness, for I knew not that spot on earth where I might turn my steps in safety. At length I bethought me of the report that the Albigeois were betaking themselves to this city of Tarascon; and I said that I would repair hither, that I might share the lot of my people; and, if they perished, perish with them. As I spoke, his countenance seemed suddenly to glow with a light from Heaven. 'Maiden,' he said, 'the faith that can prompt and sustain a woman in trials like thine, cannot be heresy; cannot be error. I will be thy companion, thy protector, thy friend, the partaker of thy faith, and the champion of thy cause: thy people shall be my people; and thy God my God.'—Pierre clasped his hands in ecstasy, and blessed her. 'As we journeyed hither,' continued Genevieve, 'I endeavoured humbly, as became an unlettered maiden, to explain to him those glorious truths that form the substance of our purer creed; and was it not wondrous, my father, that from lips like mine he would hear those truths which perchance he would have rejected, if expounded to him by the most learned of our teachers?'—Pierre smiled in silence; for though he set a value sufficiently high on his own

controversial powers, he could not help internally admitting that, to a handsome and enamoured youth, the lips of female beauty were capable of making things intelligible which would be heard with indifference from the voice of masculine orthodoxy. Zealous, however, for every dogma of his faith, he inquired into the course of argument she had adopted with her catechumen, in hope of discovering that the impression it had made was not, as might be expected, partial, temporary, and superficial.—‘I know not how it was,’ said Genevieve in her simplicity; ‘I spoke but now and then, not long or continuously; and methought nature, and the objects that presented themselves as we journeyed, seemed to take a kindly and aidful part with me. Once, I remember, when I saw him smile, (though he suppressed his smile,) at the thought that an unskilled and unlettered peasant should handle such high themes, I ventured to demand of him whether, when lonely and benighted, he had not often been cheered by the light glancing from the casement of the cottager: a light denied by the barred though lofty windows of a castled hold. And once more, as we passed near a mountain-torrent, that after its stormy fall wound quietly through the valley, he spoke with scorn of our humble and obscure estate, and proudly and painfully contrasted it with that lofty course to which his early hopes had aspired: ‘I told him, that men gazed on the cataract as it thundered from the cliff, but drank of its waters only when they rested on the plain.’—‘It is well, my child,’ said Pierre; ‘but tell me, mine own Genevieve, didst thou search thine heart, and was it clear in this matter? Thou hast painted to me the youth’s favour as goodly beyond that of the sons of men; and of a truth his bearing towards thee might have made even deformity gracious in thy sight. But did no illusion of earthly and profane passion mingle with thy hope and thy toil for his conversion? Didst thou seek to win him to thy faith, or to win him to thy-

self?'—'Not now,' said Genevieve hastily, while a slight suffusion of womanly pride and shame tinged her cheek, and she blushed as though her father could have beheld her. 'I might have had such a thought—such a dream; but, alas! my father, though in the first impulse of his noble heart he sacrificed all for me. I see every hour he repents the sacrifice; and though he would hide it from me, methinks I could almost better bear his reproaches than his silence. Never did we pass a lordly castle, but he gave a sigh to the recollection of the martial sport of the tourney; its noble guerdon, dealt by proud barons and high-descended dames. Never did we pass a church, but he sighed for the pomp of the ancient faith, where kneeling nobles received the benison of the lordly and mitred prelates; where the feet trod on the dust of princes, and the armed effigies on their tombs made the very marble eloquent of the fame of chivalry. Thus would he speak, and I wept. He saw it, and forbore to speak; and I wept the more.'—'Enough, my child,' said Pierre: 'I grieve that I probed the wound, whose cure, I see, will soon be wrought by another hand. The young knight's neglect will soon dissolve the fairy pile in which thou, poor dreamer, didst emplace thyself.'—'It matters not,' said Genevieve with a kind of heroic melancholy, hastily drying her eyes—'it matters not; he bears a good sword to the cause of the Albigeois, and a true heart to their faith. For me, my wanderings are at a close; hither have I come, and come at length to die.'—'Not so, my daughter,' said Pierre; 'for since I have met thee, methinks the love of life hath rekindled even within me.'—'But I have no wish for life,' said Genevieve, all her resolution giving way before the keen anguish his last words had excited. 'Oh, my father, I feel and know it is easier to meet death in flames and agony, than to encounter him under the withering aspect of a broken and hopeless heart.' 'Genevieve,' said the old man solemnly; and he seiz-

ed the moment of strong emotion, and tried powerfully and successfully to lead her mind back to the sole topic in which his own centred and terminated ever, and both found the change for the better, and themselves bettered by the change.

The themes on which they spoke gradually raised them above the sense of mortal suffering and of mortal fear. They spoke of grief, but they no longer spoke with tears. The daylight broke on their sad and holy conference; and their exhausted frames alike requiring rest, the pastor slumbered where he sat; and Genevieve, as she was wont in early days, sat on the ground, and resting her head on the pastor's knees, slept, resolved not to dream of Amiral.

CHAPTER XIV.

The combat deepens. On ye brave
Who rush to glory, or the grave!
Wave, Munich! all thy banners wave,
And charge with all thy chivalry!
CAMPBELL.

THE morning broke on the city of Tarascon, and found it in tumult and consternation. The disunion between the ill-organized men at-arms, and the heretics, whom they reluctantly protected, (but very willingly plundered,) was increased by the report of the pestilence being in the town, and all was distraction, mutiny, and pillage.

De Comminges inclosed himself in the citadel, and refused to hold communion even by letter with De Foix or his retainers, pretending dread of the pestilence; while his men were pillaging through the town, giving themselves up to all the desperation of sailors in a wreck, who break open lockers, dress themselves in the officers' clothes, and practise every kind of mad extravagance on the ap-

proach of their dreadful and inevitable doom. Sickening at all he saw, and hopeless in heart of all that might succeed, Sir Amirald nevertheless rode forth at dawn to reconnoitre the advance of the enemy. As he rode through the streets to the gate of Tarascon, the sounds of distant violence and uproar struck on his ear at every moment, where the fierce followers of the counts were committing acts of the wildest outrage and hostility. As he reached the gate, a kerchief was waved to him from a casement. Believing it to be a signal of distress, he reined in his steed and looked upward; and for a moment he saw the heavenly face of Genevieve, as, once more waving her kerchief she retired from the casement. On the door were inscribed the terrible characters, *Domine, miserere nobis*, and Amirald felt with agony unutterable how and where she was employed. For a moment his courage failed; he tried to rouse himself, but in vain; then at the image of this humble solitary female, at risk of life engaged in duty that she knew to be mortal, a gush of magnanimity overflowed his heart; and while (for a moment) he wept like woman, he felt more than man. 'I have seen that heavenly face for the last time,' he said with emotion, setting spurs to his steed; he dashed a tear away, and rode up the hill that neighboured the walls of Tarascon, to observe the approach of the enemy. It was not yet day, but something like a heavy cloud lay on the hills; and Sir Amirald, by the increasing light, could soon descry a vast body of troops in motion. He rode back to the city on the instant, and sought De Foix first, as De Comminges was, he deemed, inaccessible. But close beside the gates, he found both the counts at the head of their array, and both at deadly feud. 'This is the issue of thy mad counsel,' cried Comminges; 'here are we hemmed in between a foe without the walls, and a pestilence within.'—'And where be thy men-at-arms to meet the peril?' replied De Foix.—'They are

pillaging through the town. Thy is thy *foi Poictevin*;*—‘Rude lord, say that again, and my men-at-arms shall charge against thine!’—‘At thy peril!’ shouted the other; while he called to his banner-man, ‘Turn thy standard! we march back to the city of Tarascon.’—‘In Heaven’s name, lords,’ cried Amirald, riding up, ‘suspend your feud. The enemy hangs like a thunder-cloud on your hills; and here ye stand rending each other like two bloodhounds, instead of rushing together at the prey. Look yonder, and see if I speak true!’ De Foix and De Comminges turned their bloodshot and angry eyes from each other to the view of the advancing enemy, who were now indeed seen gathering on the hills like a storm. They gazed for a moment on the formidable sight with a kind of stupor (which was, however, wholly unmixed with fear;) and then, slowly drawing their suspended breath, and loosing hold of the daggers, which they held half-drawn, they turned on each other looks of mutual shame for their paltry and disgraceful broil.

Sir Amirald took advantage of this silent advance to reconciliation, and again pointed out the approach of the force, that excited, while it *almost* awed him, in language not unlike that of a more powerful poet than ever knight troubadour was—

‘Their gilt coats show like dragons’ scales—
Their march like a rough tumbling storm.’†

Their appearance was indeed terrific to all but eyes accustomed to look on war. The centre of the crusaders was led by Prince Lewis in person, and over his head was displayed the oriflamme of France, grasped by the same bold hand that had upheld it in the battle of Bovines; for at this period it was customary to crown the heir of France in his father’s lifetime (to insure the succession;) and the Dauphin therefore marched to battle in all the insignia of anticipated royalty.

* A term then equivalent to *Punica fides*.

† Beaumont and Fletcher.

But the array of Prince Lewis was all loose and disorderly: a number of light females travelled in the midst of his van; and the prince was so attentive to their accommodation, that he detached a large body of his troops to the rear, to secure their safety; while he was forever quitting his post to hold talk with the bonnibelles, amid whom his fool danced, laughed, rang his bells, and proclaimed himself the chief of the host, inasmuch as he led them who led their leader. This disarray was marked by the keen eye of Sir Amiral, and he hastened to make his advantage of it. The left wing was led by the Bishop of Toulouse, who, though invincibly brave, and profoundly skilful in the tactics of the age, could not be safely entrusted with the command of even a portion of an army; his ambitious selfishness always leading him to some desperate enterprise, by which he might himself be distinguished, were it at the loss of ten thousand lives; so that, if in a day of assault, he stood alone on some tower that was deemed impregnable, and shouted his war-cry in the voice of victory, he cared not if it pealed over the dead bodies of every follower he had led to slaughter. The position he had taken this day savoured strongly of his character: he led the left wing, which was of course opposed to the right of the city of Tarascon. On that side flowed a branch of the Rhone; and there the fortifications were neglected, the inhabitants relying on the protection of the river, and the difficulty of approaching the town. Thither the bishop was resolved to urge his forces, and make a desperate attempt, careless what befel the centre of the host or the right wing (which was led by the Count De Montfort,) provided he could first plant the banner of the Crusaders on the battlements of Tarascon. The right wing was still more inauspiciously generalled for the event of the day. De Montfort was at its head; but he was no longer the redoubtable De Montfort—the resistless champion of the armies of the Church. The wounds

he had received, which were principally in his head, had evidently weakened his powers, while they had inflamed his passions. The slightest contradiction maddened him; the most trifling opposition to his will was met by the menace of lance or dagger. He seemed to be under the alternate, or rather mingled influence of delirium and stupor. He issued orders, and revoked them; gave the most absurd commands; seemed conscious of it—but was furious if they were disobeyed. Those under his command knew not what to do, or what he would have them do; and all predicted, by their briefly exchanged looks and whispers, a disastrous event to the battle, if De Montfort, their former Maccabee, led the right wing that day.

On that day, as the historian* informs us, he appeared eminently under the influence of his morbid and portentous habits: he had refused to march without first participating in the sacrament, which he termed seeing his Lord and Saviour, as if he had a presentiment of some mortal event; and when his wish was complied with, he seemed rather more agitated, and his whole conduct and manner were those of one whom our northern neighbours would call *fey*, that is, one hurried on by supernatural impulse to his fate, and not unconscious of the impulse himself. He forced on the right wing rapidly, as if to intercept all communication between the castle of Tarascon (which lay to the left of the city) and the city itself; thus demonstrating that the post was of some importance by his movement, though the opposed forces could not yet imagine why: while the bishop, intent on *his* purpose, urged on the left wing with still greater rapidity, careless how he weakened the main body, provided he succeeded in seizing on that part of the city which he well knew to be the least defensible. The centre, thus weakened by the elongation, or rather total detachment of

* See l'Histoire des Vaudois.

its wings, was in still greater confusion from the surprise into which Prince Lewis and the fiery knights around him were thrown, at seeing a band, whom they had believed cooped up and shrinking within their city, marching forth in fair array to give them battle before its walls. 'What,' cried the Dauphin to the lords that rode round his standard, 'have these wolves, that we have hunted to their den, rushed forth to make prey of us?'—'Ar'n't like your grace,' said old Sir Aymer: 'those wolves have fangs that will snap the stoutest lances in your host.'—'I like not gray-beards to prate of battle,' said the Dauphin, scornfully reining back his steed, as if to shun the voice of the unwelcome speaker. —'Nor I,' said Sir Aymer on his part,—'nor I, boys, to dream of heading hosts,'—'Peace, Sir Aymer, peace!' cried the standard-bearer, who stood justly high in the favour of the Dauphin: 'the cloud that is spreading on yon plain hath somewhat overshadowed Prince Lewis's memory of thy worth.' —'And if report says true,' answered Sir Aymer, 'the cloud that is gathering on yon hills will turn that shadow into night, ere it be noon.' And he pointed with emphatic gesture to the hills, whence a rumour had reached the Crusaders that Raymond of Toulouse was approaching with the embodied fiend among his host; nor did the terror of this wild report, in those ages, at all impair its authenticity or its effect.

'Who is that boy?' said Prince Lewis, proudly turning to his followers, 'who rides careering in their van? He is neither herald nor pursuivant by his garb. Go thou,' to one of his pages, 'and ask if he be warder of yon towers: go tell him we will spare him farther pains to guard them within in an hour.' The page (who was an esquire of noble birth) bowed to his steed's mane, set spurs, and rode. In a short space—whilst Prince Lewis was laughing between a youthful knight, who counselled him to ride on and trample on the host, as peasants tread

their vintage, and a fair dame, who was patting the proud neck of his war-steed with her white hand,—the page rode back at full speed, but stood silent. ‘Speak on,’ said the Dauphin, ‘without fear, and without offence.’

‘My liege,’ answered the page, ‘the youth is somewhat insolent; and saith, if you are fatigued in taking his place of warder of the towers of Tarascon, your brows shall be wiped by his hand in such wise that you will never have to undergo such toil again. —‘ Lords, gentlemen, noble knights, do you hear such message done to a son of France!’ cried the fiery Dauphin. ‘What say you?’—‘On, on, to the fight!’ cried a thousand voices; and twice that number of lances were put in rest, and of swords drawn and flashing round the oriflamme of France. ‘Send forth the archers and slingers first!’ cried Sir Aymer, riding up by the Dauphin’s side.—‘Churlish knight, I disdain thee and thy counsel!’—exclaimed Prince Lewis, spurring his steed.—‘Upon them, lords—upon them, on the instant!’ Sir Aymer laid his hand on the Dauphin’s rein; the fierce Prince smote it with his battle-axe, and the old knight held it up bleeding: ‘This will not be the last blood I will shed in thy cause to-day, Prince Dauphin,’ he cried, as he spurred on his steed with the rest, holding the reins with his bleeding hand. Sir Amirald marked the confusion of the host, and rode at full speed back to that which was advancing from the city of Tarascon.

The full array of the troops of the Counts de Foix and de Comminges was more formidable than could be apprehended by their adversaries. The intense zeal of the Albigeois had induced them to submit to the military discipline of their Catholic leaders, (however they might detest their creed,) and the stout peasantry, already well skilled in the use of the bow and sling, were placed in front of the host, thus supplying the *mat riel* of the van of a feudal army, (which always consisted of slingers

and archers,) and feeling their experience more than an equivalent for the military tact which was supposed the exclusive possession of feudal vassals. Moreover, there were amongst them many (and Boanerges at their head) whose strong frames and muscular power easily bore the weight of arms, and wielded the weapons of the practised militarist; their zeal, eagerness, and perseverance supplying every deficiency of practice and habit. Undeterred by ridicule, unappalled by novelty, and undaunted by danger—rigid, cold, but submissive and watchful, they easily caught the simple tactics of the age, their very creed supplying a motive which was wanted by the mercenary pelerins and the feudal military vassals, and formed a powerful and formidable addition to the troops who had at first despised their inexperience, and undervalued their aid. Besides these, the troops of De Foix and De Comminges were swelled by the accession of the armed bands of many a powerful lord of Languedoc: and De Foix had (apparently to the foe) doubled the number of knights in his army, by causing every knight to bear *two* banners; a *ruse* by which Henry of Winchester, a few years after, won a battle from the King of France.

The battle of the two counts was thus arrayed, when Sir Amiral d reined up his panting steed by that of De Foix. ‘My noble lords,’ said he, ‘some disorder prevails in the centre of the host. Mark, too,’ he added, pointing with rapid and emphatic gesture, ‘how fast the wings are marching away! Seize, seize the moment, noble De Foix, valiant Comminges: grant me but fifty men-at arms to break their battle, and if I do not scatter their puny defence of archers and slingers, and lay my hand on the Dauphin’s rein ere a follower be lost, may there be not one left to bestride my corse!’—‘Thou shalt have them,’ said De Foix; ‘and if thou break their battle, youth, I will follow with a wedge of men-at-

that shall split yon oak of the field till it groan and totter.'

At a signal, fifty men-at-arms were detached from his train. 'Haste, fellows, haste,' cried Amiral,—'haste, that we may win advantage of the sun and wind, which the van of Prince Lewis is marching to gain! Haste, such advantage won the battle of Bovines!' He shouted at the top of his voice; a hundred gathered round him as he rode. 'By heaven,' cried De Foix, 'this boy will teach us generalship! On!' he cried: 'St Denis to aid, though thou fightest against his banner! Spur and speed be the word!'—'Win thy spurs, boy,' said Comminges coldly.—'They were won in a bloodier field than ever the Count de Comminges fought in,' cried the youth, spurring his steed. 'Boy! my deeds shall prove me man to-day!' And as he spoke, he and his band parted like lightning from a cloud. De Foix and his associate meanwhile took brief counsel how they might best avail themselves of the obvious disunion that appeared to prevail among the host of the Crusaders. On the sudden—'While we are talking,' cried De Foix, 'all is done: look, noble De Comminges!' His companion threw his eyes in the direction, and saw

The fiery youth with desperate charge
Make for a space an opening large—*

and, trampling down the faint resistance of the slingers and archers, who had not even time to draw the short swords with which they were to support the charge of the chivalry, penetrate almost to where the knights of the royal train surrounded Prince Lewis, while the oriflamme shook in the standard-bearer's grasp at the successful temerity of the assault. The assault was indeed successful; but Sir Amiral and his band, after their fierce force was spent, were repelled, and recoiled like a wave from

* Scott.

a rock, retreating in foam and shivers, but rallying for the return even in the retreat. They were nobly upheld: De Foix and De Comminges gave their steeds the rein, and, lowering their heads to shun the sling-stones and arrows, they 'charged with all their chivalry' in aid of Sir Amirald: half-way he met them, like a spent swimmer on a wave; 'Once more, once more,' he gasped, 'noble De Foix, noble De Comminges, and the day is ours: the Dauphin's band is all disarrayed; the wings wander wide.'—'Seize the Dauphin, and the day and the field is ours,' cried De Foix, spurring faster. 'What, boy, doth thy mettle fail now?'

Amirald's heart burned and bled at the thought of meeting the Crusaders as a foe; but the din of battle had stunned his ears, and the flame of fight was glowing in his eyes: he bowed his head, couched his lance, and spurred fiercely on with the rest. The first essay of Sir Amirald had broken and scattered the centre of the Crusaders; and now, on that broken and scattered array, the furious assault of the confederate Counts had its full effect: they charged, retired for a moment, wheeled and charged again, leaving at every attack as many corpses behind them as blows had been struck.

The Crusaders, who at first had almost scorned to exchange blows with their assailants, now began to gather round the oriflamme, to shield the sacred life of the Prince, leaving their men-at-arms to be slaughtered and trampled down without regard. The Dauphin himself, too late aware of the presumption and temerity that always prompted the first movements of the Crusaders, began to throw anxious looks toward the wings, now wandering far and wide. 'Where is the bishop of Toulouse?' cried Lewis.—'Within the walls of Tarascon by this time,' said Sir Aymer, who still rode near him, 'it steed and steel hold out.'—'Prophet of evil!' cried the Dauphin, darting a furious glance at him;

—‘but we shall soon have better tidings: hither rides a knight from the bishop’s host.’—‘My lord the Dauphin!’ cried the panting messenger, ‘the Bishop of Toulouse commends him to you: the holy and valiant prelate hath won the city of Tarascon, and prays you but to send a hundred men at-arms to aid him to maintain his post.’—‘Meet state we are in,’ said Lewis chafing, ‘to lend him aid! Look thou how the tusks of those boars, De Foix and De Comminges, have gored our van! Let the bishop recall his forces on the instant, nor dream of his vaunted victory while the life of his liege lord is in peril!’—‘I will do your message,’ said the knight, who fell dead of his wounds as he turned his reins to ride. ‘Nought but blood and death around us!’ cried Lewis: ‘where is Simon de Montfort?’—‘Far on his way to gain the pass between the castle of Tarascon and the city,’ said Sir Aymer, ‘lest the former should yield support to the heretics.’—‘*Par le sang des Rois,*’ cried Lewis, gnashing his teeth with fury, ‘madness seems to have taken possession of all the host! In the name of all the fiends, how chances it that De Montfort is intercepting aid from a castle, which is held for the Crusaders by the trusty Lambert de Limons?’—‘Perchance it may be necessary to secure it for thine escape, Prince Dauphin,’ continued Sir Aymer, ‘specially if the close of this day resemble its beginning!’—‘Raven, cease thy croaking!’ cried the Dauphin fiercely. ‘Valiant knights,’ he added, ‘there will be but short trial of your patience. I see aid advancing from yon hill, the forces of Vaugelas and De Limosin. Ride up yon hill, valiant knights, we shall thence command a better view, and be safe for a while from these fierce assailants! Lord Abbot of Normoutier, (for the abbot had once more been induced to ride at the head of his church vassals with the Crusaders,) ride up! See you not a descending band sweeping like a mist down yon hills?

And see—and see, a messenger rides fast; he comes with good tidings!’—‘Holy St. Benedict,’ cried the abbot of Normoutier, ‘did ever messenger of good tidings ride so ill-bested? He is stuck through with arrows, and can scarce sit his horse.’—‘Think you so, my lords?’ said the Dauphin to his panting train, who, most of them wounded, had with difficulty gained the summit of the hill. There was no time for conjecture: the messenger, who was a scout of their own, sent out to reconnoitre the advancing aid, returned stuck with arrows, a score of archers in full pursuit of him, (or, in the language of the chase, growing to his haunches,) but dispersing as his fleet but wounded steed bore him beyond their reach, while the loyal vassal, though mortally wounded, shouted ‘*Sauve qui peut!*’ Raymond of Toulouse is in the field, crying “No quarter;” and the incarnate devil, clad like a knight in sable armour, fights by his side. All mortal aid is vain. Betake you to shrift, noble knights: for me, my task is done. It is a bloody day; it will be a bloodier night!’ He fell from his horse as he spoke. He died; and none marked his end.

The terrible intelligence of Count Raymond being in the field, the fearful report (credible enough in those days) of the evil spirit himself being his auxiliary, and the certainty of their being thus enclosed between two hosts,—the troops of De Foix and De Comminges, and those of Count Raymond,—sent a terror to every heart, ‘Save, save the Dauphin!’ was the universal cry. Lewis was not wanting either in generosity or in valour. He dashed something like a tear from his eye, and then held a brief council with the few who were near him in this last exigency.

‘Sir Aymer, what think’st thou?’ he said.—‘That the oriflamme of France was never in such danger since it was blessed by the holy Abbot Luger, on the deliverance of thine ancestor Lewis VI.’ answer-

ed the blunt but faithful knight.—‘Gaston de Mortigny,’ said the Dauphin to his standard-bearer, ‘what is thy counsel?’—‘The same that I gave your highness’ father at the battle of Boyvines,’ said the firm knight; ‘I told King Philip, that, while the oak stood, the branch should never be rent from its trunk, and, if your grace so please, the branch shall cleave to the royal sapling this day, as it did to the ancient trunk, let the storm blow as it lists.’—‘Then let the storm blow as it lists!’ cried Prince Lewis, tossing his arms with agitated action like the oak in a tempest; and all the knights around him shouted, ‘Let the storm blow as it list!’ and clashing their lances against their shields, drowned their redoubled shouts in the martial sound.

A dreadful scene was going on in another part of the field. The Bishop of Toulouse found the post in the city of Tarascon, that his desperate valour had won, untenable. The messengers he had despatched for aid had either perished, or returned with disastrous tidings of the Dauphin being hotly beset in the centre, and demanding succour instead of being able to yield it. The bishop kept his steady and far-seeing eye fixed on the oriflamme. ‘Gaston de Mortigny holds the standard still,’ he said internally; ‘the Dauphin is but panic-struck.’ Meanwhile, he saw and recognized the banners of Count Raymond on the hills; while De Comminges, at that moment, had detached his powers to assail him as he burst from the walls of Tarascon, that he could no longer keep, to hew his way back to the distracted and harassed centre of the host. He paused a moment: the approach of Raymond of Toulouse was inevitable—the assault of De Comminges was not less so: and the bishop, wiping his ‘mailed brow with his bloody hand,’ computed calmly that a thousand lives must be lost, ere he could win the centre of the host. With his voice of thunder he shouted to his followers, whom he was about to sacri-

fice; with his battle-axe, wielded with resistless might; he began to deal death among all that encountered him. His strokes fell like a woodman's—not on oaks that he cleaved, but on twigs that he shred; and the whole forest of the field went crushing down before him. He struck De Comminges below his horse's hoofs; he mowed down his train like rushes before a peasant's staff; he trampled on the dying bodies of his own men at arms. Yet, still there appeared 'a great gulf fixed' between him and the centre of the host, where, though safety was doubtful, it could alone be won. De Foix, Sir Amiral, and their powers, rallying after their third sally to respire; and to despatch aid to the fainting and defeated wing led by De Comminges, pushed their gored and panting steeds up a small eminence to reconnoitre. Here they paused for a moment; and Amiral's kindling eye rested with involuntary admiration on the progress of the Bishop of Toulouse, while he

'Mowed across and made irregular harvest,
Defaced the pomp of battle,'*

trampling an hundred lives beneath him, and menacing a thousand more by the resistless might that had laid those hundreds low.

De Foix, after surveying the field for a moment, exclaimed, 'If Raymond of Toulouse *be* in the field—if Raymon *be* in the field—his war-word will be *Point de quartier!* Get thee a fresh steed, Sir Amiral, and charge once more. They are marching like the wind towards the Castle of Tarascon: that betokens disaster and defeat. Throw thyself between them and the Castle of Tarascon, and leave the day to me.'

Sir Amiral cast one reluctant look of brave regret on the routed and prostrate wing of De Comminges, and hastened to obey the order of De Foix.

* Dryden's Don Sebastian.

All the loyal chivalry of France had gathered round the Dauphin. He sat on his steed for some moments, agitated less by his danger than by that enthusiasm of devoted hearts that his own was too full to answer. He paused—fluctuated—turned his eyes towards the Castle of Tarascon—cast them again on the brave band that rallied round him. His foot was half in the stirrup to fly—his hand on his sword to fight—when the Bishop of Toulouse, dyed in blood (but not his own) from heel to helm, spurred the third steed he had bestrided that day by the Dauphin's side. 'My lord the Dauphin,' he cried, 'why this delay? Save your royal life, and let those of your subjects pay their prince's ransom!' The Prince hesitated. The counsel of those who surrounded him was all various and contradictory. 'Seek the ramparts of the Castle of Tarascon!' cried some.—'Seek no rampart but that of the bodies of thy foes, that these loyal lances shall soon rear around thee!' cried others.—'Cease your vain tumult, knights!' shouted the commanding voice of the bishop. 'Raymond of Toulouse is in the field!'—'And men say the incarnate fiend fights beneath his banner!' cried the sole survivor of the bishop's train.—'An' it be so,' cried the Abbot of Normoutier, 'it is time for me to quit the field: I marched against mortal men; but I am no match for the devil.'—'Coward priest! desertest thou thus?' cried Prince Lewis, as the abbot, with his numerous train, turned his reins; his crosierbearer riding fast in the van.—'Recreant and disloyal churchman! dost thou fly—and at such a moment?' shouted the Bishop of Toulouse, as the advancing banners of Count Raymond waved over the diminished and distracted host of the Crusaders, like the wings of ravens over anticipated corpses.—*Do pignora certa timendo,* quoth the abbot, clapping spurs to his steed; while all the church vassals followed fast, the crosier glittering in the van,—'False priest!' cried the Bishop

of Toulouse, 'would there were a bow in mine hand and the arrow should nail thee to the earth as thou ridest. Prince Dauphin, take counsel for thy life; escape to the Castle of Tarascon. The arrows of Count Raymond's host are already galling the flanks of thine. Some strange misadventure hath befallen us to-day. Win but the Castle of Tarascon, and to-morrow——' 'On to the castle! my best lord,' shouted a thousand voices:—and Prince Lewis set on, well trusting that Simon de Montfort had secured his safe reception there.—'Take my reins,' said the desponding prince to Gaston de Mortigny as he rode; 'I am no longer fit to guide even mine own steed.'—'My prince,' said the firm standard-bearer, 'mine hand was never wont to sustain other burthen than that of the oriflamme; and it shall be severed from my body ere it quit its grasp.'

Voices on voices now shouted, 'Haste! my liege, haste!—the foe perceives our disarray,'—'Raymond of Toulouse presses on our rear!' cried others, thronging fast with their disastrous tidings.'

Lewis stood stupefied with shame and despair. Starting at length from his trance, 'Take thou this shield,' he cried, flinging it to a page; 'and take thou this,' to another, tearing off his surcoat, emblazoned with the royal lilies and the cross of the Crusaders; 'a fugitive should no longer bear the insignia of a leader!'

De Foix marked their disarray. 'Ride up!—ride up! Sir Amirald,' he cried; 'take two—take two hundred—take three—take all my choicest men, and throw thyself between the Crusaders and the Castle of Tarascon. My devoir, as brother-in-arms, binds me to rescue De Comminges.' They parted each on his desperate enterprise; and that instantaneous parting was like the eruption of distinct flashes of lightning from an overcharged cloud.

As Sir Amirald rode, his eye involuntarily glanced (in spite of the deathful impetuosity of his speed,)

on the scenery that surrounded the defile through which he pressed. The banners of Count Raymond surmounted the distant hills; his van rushed glittering from their summits, and amid their windings, the track of the gemmed and gilded crosier, glancing and disappearing as the riders wound up the eminences and descended the declivities, marked the flight of the Abbot of Normoutier. But all power of observation was lost, when he hastened to fling himself between the power of the Crusaders and the Castle of Tarascon; for at his first approach, the castle, which till that moment had stood like a dark, unexploding volcano, from bartizan and battlement, from every loop and shot-hole, rained down such a shower from bow and arbalist, that half the boldest that Sir Amiralld led lay corse beneath the first discharge, and the second rank who succeeded formed as they fell only a rampart for those who followed to scale, and meet the same fate ere they had climbed the dreadful and slippery ascent of mangled bodies and streaming blood.

Lambert de Limons, an expert tactician, had reserved all his artillery for the crisis which he foresaw, and its effect was complete. It was in vain that Sir Amiralld tried to rally his powers; exclusive of the shot from the loop-holes, that fell like the gigantic hail on the foes of Joshua, fifty cross-bow-men stationed on the bartizan, (like riflemen in modern tactics,) of whom every one could shoot 'five hundred feet him fro.' were ranged there, taking down at their leisure man and life. Sir Amiralld felt his post untenable: he was about to wind his bugle to recall the few survivors, when an unusual movement among the Crusaders made him pause.

The Dauphin and the Bishop of Toulouse, with their trains, in taking their determination to seek shelter in the Castle of Tarascon, had reckoned on their safe arrival there, as the wing of their army led by Simon de Montfort was almost under its tow-

ers; but ere their flight (for such it was) could bear them to the spot, Sir Amirald was there, and Simon de Montfort was already mortally wounded.

All now was tumult and consternation: De Montfort, whose fierce spirit predominated even in death, called for a fresh steed, but vainly attempted to mount him. Mental terrors, hitherto unknown, seemed working together with his bodily suffering. From the moment that he had heard the wild report of an evil spirit in the guise of a sable knight riding in aid of Count Raymond, he had exclaimed that it was the spirit of the Count de Beziers, (of whose murder he was more than suspected,) and exclaimed that whenever he attempted to raise his battle-axe, a hand in black armour lay on his arm, and weighed down by its pressure soul and brand. But at the voice of Prince Lewis he seemed madly excited once more, and grasping the arm of his squire, 'Thou seest,' he said, 'this gash on my forehead so overflows mine eyes with blood that I can no longer see to guide my reins: place me, I charge thee, faithful Raoul, right before the Dauphin; and on my feet, while they can support me, I will do a warrior's deeds, or die a warrior's death.' — 'Stay not to listen to this madman, my liege,' cried the Bishop of Toulouse; 'make for the castle ere all be lost.' The bishop's action gave full warrant for his words; he spurred right onward towards the barrier that Sir Amirald's band presented between him and the castle: 'the iron sleet of arrowy shower,' that had rained from the Castle of Tarascon intermitted on the bishop's approach; the garrison, by the direction of Lambert de Limons, sparing their foes, lest they should destroy their friends. Amirald seized the moment to extend his line between the lowered drawbridge and the approach of the bishop's power.

The bishop paused on his desperate position: the protended lances of Amirald's band were before

him. Suddenly forsaking his stirrups, with a hand of iron he twice and thrice plunged his dagger into the quivering flanks of his steed; and the noble animal, agonizing under the blows, with one spring cleared the lances of the band, and fell on his haunches amid its centre. Another stab of the dagger raised him in a moment: the bishop forsook the reins, and wielded his battle-axe. He had plunged like a rock falling into the ocean, but the dispersed waves soon recoiled. Many lay crushed beneath the weight of the impulse: others rose; and others, who could not rise, grasped with their maimed and dying hands at the bishop's reins, which lay loose on the neck of his steed. Those hands were severed by the blows of his battle-axe, wielded right and left with a velocity and force as resistless as they are indescribable; and the last spring of his martyred steed lodged the bishop on the drawbridge of the Castle of Tarascon. 'Follow him—follow the valiant prelate, my liege!' cried the Crusaders. Prince Lewis spurred his steed.

At that moment, a sortie from the Castle pouring over the lowered drawbridge, forced Sir Amiral on, spite of himself, till in the tide of battle his hand was on the Dauphin's rein. 'Base renegade!' cried a voice, 'lay'st thou hand on thy prince's rein?' 'What am I now?' said Lewis, as, stupified, he appeared to ask of Amiral whether he were prisoner.—'What art thou? The Dauphin of France still,' answered the voice.—'Leave me to deal with this Sir Knight Sans-barbe.' And his blow, wielded with no light hand, made Sir Amiral yield: hold of the Dauphin's rein, and turn in his own defence. His antagonist, by many evolutions performed with more skill than force, but which proved him master of the strategy of the age, succeeded in drawing Sir Amiral to some distance from the spot. Amiral, incensed at being thus deluded, and baffled by one whose hoary beard was visible through the bars of

his helmet, now struck with such good aim and hearty hand, that the old knight almost breathless exclaimed, 'Hold, sir boy! By heaven, thou smitest like Guillaume *le Charpentier*,* in the old Crusades. No marvel thou art silent: thou lackest all thy breath for such blows.' Amirald answered him in the words of an old chivalric song—

*Un Chevalier, n'en doutez pas,
Doit ferir hault, et parler bas.*

—'Say'st thou me so?' said the old knight, whose associations appeared to be awakened, but in no friendly manner, by the sound of his voice. 'Then have at thee!' and he dealt a blow at the casque of Amirald (the rivets of which were loosened in the struggle of the day) with such good-will and steady aim, that it rolled on the ground; and his head was exposed to the next blow of his adversary. It descended, but was paralyzed in its descent as Sir Aymer discovered the features of his former protégé, Amirald. Its force was, however, such as to lay the young knight prostrate before him. 'Strike,' said Amirald; 'but, as thou art a knight, protect a young female in yon beleaguered and distressed town, whom thou hast, I believe, bereft of all other protector.' Sir Aymer was at the moment beside Amirald, and supporting him on his knee as he lay. 'Protect *her*!' he cried, almost in tears,—'*her* who hath been thy ruin? Now, out on her, hilding and harlot! Could she not be content with going to the devil her own heretic way, but she must needs have thee to bear her company? Look up, my boy, and live; and a fair course of chivalry and love is yet bright before thee.'—'Oh!' said the youth, faintly raising himself on his arm, while a sickening ago-

* So called, because his strokes in battle were said to be as heavy as those of a *carpenter*. See Mill's History of the Crusades. One would have thought *le forgeron* would have been 'more germane to the matter.'

ny overcame his whole frame,—‘ Oh that, instead of defaming the most pure and heavenly being of God’s creation, thou wouldst adopt her better creed!’

‘ Teach me—tell me it!’ cried Sir Aymer in the overflowings of his kindly heart, as he bent over his dying favourite. ‘ But, no, boy; thou mayest spare the labour!’ he said half-sighingly, half-lightly. ‘ I could resign unintelligible dogmas and inexplicable mysteries; but I never, never can resign that devotion that worships female saints;—no, never for thee, dear boy, (and thou wast very dear to me,) can I give up that dear devotion. Pshaw! change the visage of a Madonna for that of one of thy cowed barbes!’

At this moment a shout from the Crusaders announced that the Dauphin had reached the castle in safety; and the loyal hearted knights now took the calm counsel of despair together, like the sailors who despatched a boat from their sinking ship to land James the Second on the coast of Scotland, and, as he reached it in safety, gave him three cheers from the deck of their own devoted vessel.

There was but too much cause for their despair. De Foix, who had collected the routed wing of De Comminges, flung his whole force between the Crusaders and the Castle of Tarascon. The Bishop of Toulouse, by desperate valour, aided by the super-human strength of his gigantic frame, had passed the barrier: so had Prince Lewis, by the aid of his loyal knights. But as Simon de Montfort, blinded with his own blood, and maddened with the agony of his wounds, was led towards the bridge, a *quarrel*, from a cross-bow aimed at De Foix, who stood nearer the tower, struck on his head, mingling the fragments of his helmet with his brains and blood, —and the Champion of the Church was no more!*

* The Count de Montfort perished thus, not under the castle of Tarascon, but the walls of Toulouse.—*Vide Perrin.*

The body was hurried into the castle by the attendants.

The gap thus made in the battle of the Crusaders was closed in a moment; but the loss of Simon de Montfort was recalled and remembered for centuries afterwards.

There was not a moment now to lament his loss. The powers of Raymond of Toulouse came on apace, the sable knight raging like a whirlwind in its van: De Foix and his band, blazing like a moat of fire between the Crusaders and the castle, few passed it with life, and fewer still who did so survived long. The strife beneath the walls resembled more the struggle of demons in their native element of fire, than the strife of mortal men. Steed and stirrup, lance and sword, were forsaken:—it was breast to breast—limb to limb—dagger to dagger—heart to heart,—canopied by arrow-flight—darkened by the discharge of war-wolf and catapult.

Amid this scene of demoniac horror and madness, it was admirable to see how the strong feeling of religion alone armed its humblest professor in panoply.

The Monk of Montcalm, who had followed humbly in the rear of the splendid array of the Abbot of Normoutier, had, on the first intelligence of his defection, thrown himself into the Castle of Tarascon; and now he stood, amid the flight of five hundred arrows, to do his holy duty by those who fought and those who fell. Warned of his danger, but slighting it, he stationed himself on the bartizan of the great gate that commanded the drawbridge. From that spot he gave the general benediction to the hundreds that were perishing; and then, exalting his voice and straining his sight, attempted to give absolution to the individuals whom he saw claiming it: and, amid the horror and tumult of that mortal fight, many a dying Crusader turned his swimming eye, and tried to clasp his blood-steeped

hands, and to raise his maimed and shattered limbs, to meet the last blessing, or even to catch the last sight, of the holy Monk of Montcalm!

At the first shout, announcing the escape of the Dauphin, Sir Aymer, who had led his antagonist from the spot merely to secure his Prince's safety, began, now that that was provided for, to think of his own. 'Farewell!' he cried: 'and yet it pities my very heart to leave thee thus; though I may be in worse plight myself, an' I tarry longer. I must needs leave the devil and the heretic together to settle accounts: I will defer the closing of mine with him while I can:'—and he galloped off. Yet, with a touch of his natural kindness of heart, returning for a moment, he told Amirald, that if he could reach the city of Tarascon, he might shelter there in safety; as the report of the plagues raging there was a mere *ruse*, invented by Lambert de Limons, and executed by the malignity of the dying wretch, who was in fact its only victim.

As he disappeared, the eyes of Amirald, swimming in mortal sickness, were lifted towards the hills on which the giant form of the sable night rode, careering like the master and compeller of the stormy clouds that were gathering fast on their summits. His train came far behind, for not one dared to ascend or descend the precipices abreast of him, nor even on the plain could they match for a moment the supernatural fleetness of his course. Amirald's senses failed him as he gazed on this portentous figure and its movements; and saw the hills dimly mixed in his swimming vision with the form that swept along them. When he recovered from his trance, he found himself in a glen, small, narrow, and solitary, apart from the battle, but not from its roar, whose thunders from time to time startled its lonely echoes. His first sensation was amazement at finding himself in a place of comparative safety: he raised himself slowly on his el-

bow, like one who, awaking from slumber, sees himself conveyed into an unknown chamber, and wonders how he was brought there. There was no one to tell him that the sable knight had commanded some of his train, who were about to nail him to the earth where he lay, to raise and convey him to the nearest place of possible safety. There was, indeed, no one to tell this, or aught else; for Amiral d soon perceived that the glen was choked with dead bodies up to the bases of the rocks that enclosed it. They were the bodies of some of De Foix's band; and this pass seemed to have been disputed with mortal hostility: every man had fallen where he fought, and every man lay on his back as he fell.

As Amiral d looked round on this death-place of unburied corpses, the agonizing thirst excited by his wounds was aggravated by the sound of 'gurgling waters near;' and the lonely, gentle sound was a kind of rebuke uttered by Nature to the outrages exercised by man in her holiest quietudes.

Amiral d tried to raise and drag himself in the direction of the sound. As he crawled over the dead bodies—for he could not move without touching or treading on one—a groan issued beneath his feet: he started—it came from one that yet lived. Amiral d, stooping, tried to recognize form or lineament in the breather; but he was so mangled and crushed by his wounds and fall, that his mother, searching the field, would not have known her own child.

Forgetting the thirst that parched him, Amiral d toiled to raise the sufferer, and at length dragged from beneath the weight of incumbent bodies the giant-form of Boanerges. Amiral d's short warfare under the banners of De Foix had made him acquainted with the name and person of the warlike pastor, and with increasing effort he succeeded at last in placing him with his back against a rock. He was dying. Amiral d made his way to the

spring—tasted it—brought back some drops in his cloven shield, and bathed the brow and lip of the dying man. They refreshed him. ‘Raise me up,’ cried Boanerges, ‘if thou hast any christian mercy.’—‘I will,’ said the youth, ‘if my failing strength can sustain thee; but I fear thy state is past all hope.’—‘It is not that,’ said Boanerges—‘it is not that; but did I not hear, as I fell—or was it a dream in my deadly trance? hath the oppressor ceased? is Simon de Montfort dead.’—‘Simon de Montfort hath perished,’ said Amirald, ‘and the Crusaders are defeated. The powers of De Foix and de Comminges, aided by Raymond of Toulouse, hold the field.’—‘Raise me higher, higher, good youth,’ cried the stern Albigeois, ‘that I may see the slaughter—the slaughter of the enemies of the Lord, while my dying eyes yet can behold it.’—‘In the name of God,’ cried Amirald, suddering at this posthumous vindictiveness, ‘turn your mind to better thoughts. I am not so well versed in thy creed as thou must be; but does it suggest no other comfort at thy dying hour?’

‘The everlasting hills take part against them,’ cried Boanerges: ‘they reel round and charge; and their leaders are the storms and the clouds that have so often been the shelter of the Albigeois; they are weaving winding-sheets for them on the hill-tops. The spirits of those who perished there are coming to greet them, mother and babe; but’—extending his mangled arms towards the Castle of Tarascon—‘Simon de Montfort hath perished, and envies his victims already.’

‘Alas! alas!’ cried Amirald, ‘think not of such things now—speak not so fearfully;’ and, in involuntary forgetfulness of his new creed, he held up his cross-handled sword to fix the eyes of the dying man on the symbol of redemption. A rigid pallor had overspread the face of Boanerges; but at the sight of the cross his eyes kindled with a ghastly

light, and lifting his maimed hand, 'Take away the abomination!' he cried: then in a fainter voice, 'Nay, let me see it once more; the blade is red with Crusaders' blood.' He gazed, smiled, and expired.

Amirald now felt as if alone on earth: the last survivor near him lay a corse at his feet. He turned his heavy eyes towards the Castle of Tarascon, where the work of death was still going on; for the powers of Count Raymond were now almost beneath its walls, mowing down by hundreds the remains of the Crusaders, who, dispirited by the fate of De Montfort, and the flight of the Dauphin and the Bishop of Toulouse, seemed to submit to their fate with the passiveness of sheep penned in a fold to the unresisted ravages of a band of wolves. As band after band of Raymond's army swept along the hills, Amirald raised his voice, and waved his bloody scarf, to call for aid; as he felt that a knight of De Foix's army would meet prompt assistance from the allied band of the Count of Toulouse.

The thunder of their speed drowned his feeble appeal: his weakness increased; and he was sinking down half in stupor, half in despair, to die, when the tones of a heart-remembered voice, uttered in the most piercing distress, roused him in a moment to life and energy. Other bands besides those of Raymond were traversing the field: among them were some of the troops of the Bishop of Toulouse, whom he had led within the very walls of the city in his first wild and unsupported assault, and had left behind him to fight back their desperate way, or to perish. A few had succeeded in the former attempt; but previously they had encumbered themselves with some rich plunder in the town, and some females distinguished for beauty—and aware of a circuitous direction by which they might reach the postern of the castle, they had skirmished on the skirts of the battle, and now, by the shelter of twi-

light, dispersing in small bands and various directions, were speeding onwards with their respective plunder.

Amid a share rudely divided and fiercely contested was Genevieve, whose beauty made her too precious a prize to be lightly resigned. As a few, who had parted from the rest, were hurrying with their victim through the solitary glen, (as their least dangerous path,) the sight of Amirald's crest and broken plume caught her eye, and her shriek of 'Save me! for the love of Heaven, save me!' thrilled in his ringing ears. To start to his feet, to wave his broken brand, to rush among the ruffians, and be felled to the earth by their blows, was but the action of a moment. Of all that followed he was unconscious: but his splendid armour marking him as no vulgar prisoner, his body, still senseless, was borne into the Castle of Tarascon, when nightfall rendered the approach to the postern safe; and along with it was borne that of Genevieve—not senseless, indeed, but silent in despair.

CHAPTER XV.

Come in, and let us banquet royally

After this golden day of victory.

SHAKESPEARE'S *Henry the Sixth*.

COUNT Raymond of Toulouse feasted that night in his tent, with all his warriors, in the pride of victory. Their spirits were elated, and with reason. This was no triumph by ambuscade over the Crusaders, like the first they had obtained;—no desultory skirmish, like that in which the Bishop of Toulouse's troops had been cut off by the Count, when he attempted to intercept the progress of the Albigensians towards Arragon:—they had met the Crusaders in their might, face to face, and in pitched battle had defied and defeated them. Meanwhile goblets were filled and drained to the pledge of '*Vive Toulouse!*' and already, in the imagination of the revellers, the Count was established in his territorial city, and his subjects allowed the free exercise of their religion.

Count Raymond sat and listened; sometimes elated and sometimes depressed, as he heard the boasts of victory lately achieved. He remembered how often he had been thus hailed and greeted by lips that were now cold! He dwelt inwardly on a wearying recollection of war, woe, persecution, and

vicissitude for twenty years, with gleams of success between, like the brief light of a sun in a wintry sky, darkness fast following. As he thought thus, he raised the goblet to his lips and drained it; resolving to forget the past if he could, and to enjoy the present. The debate of the knights struck on his ear without exciting his attention, till one of them demanded, 'Wherefore did not that sable knight, who had such noble share in our toil to-day, meet us at the feast to-night?'—'Who hath seen him but in battle?' said another. 'He shuns all human converse and society.'—'He never assists at mass, nor utters his prayers apart, like an Albigeois,' added another speaker.

The mention of the sable knight's name was like 'the letting out of water:' report followed report, and whisper whisper. 'Though he shuns all converse,' it was said, 'he talks often with that ill-favoured page who ever follows him,—more like the imp of a wizard than the attendant of a noble knight.

'Who hath ever seen his visor unclosed,' asked an ancient knight, 'since he hath joined our host?'—'Who would wish to see it?' replied another: 'his casque to day sustained blows that would have felled earthly man.'—'And the arrows slew right and left,' said another, 'but pierced not him: they glanced on his mail like chaff flung against the wind.'—'And his steed, with five barbed arrows quivering in its flank, and its sides all gore, made a leap that no mortal steed ever made, bestrode by mortal rider,' added another.

'Count of Toulouse,' said the ancient knight, 'I would rather lose the fairest field that ever mortal arm struck in, were life the wage and a throne the prize, than win it by evil aid, such as I dread was marshalled on thy side to-day in the form of that unknown knight.'

'Noble sir,' said the Count, with his wonted

fluctuation, 'you think not so darkly of the stranger?—and yet, perchance——'

'Heed him not, noble Count Raymond!' said a youthful knight—'heed not those dreams! I saw nought achieved by this sable knight, as ye call him, beyond mortal prowess.' A murmur was heard among the knights. 'I say,' he continued, raising his voice, 'the fears of the cravens he dealt with first distorted him into a fiend and then they ran away from the fiend their fears had raised.'

'Fair lord,' said the ancient knight, 'may I be heard?'—'With all good favour,' said the Count. 'What is it you would demand, sir knight?'—'How this nameless knight chanced to lend you the aid of his arm, of which all must allow the might, though many may doubt by whom that might is given?'—'I will tell ye,' said Count Raymond, as if he felt relief like that which confession gives to a penitent,—'I will tell ye. Harken, noble gentlemen and friends, all of you.'

He leaned with his arms on the table as he spoke, looking thoughtfully: the heads of all within hearing were closely inclined towards him, and many a cheek was pale at the expected tale, which the approach of danger and death that day had tinged only with a fiercer red.

'It was on the evening,' said Count Raymond, 'that the sufferings of my oppressed vassals, and the treachery and pride of Rome, had compelled me once more to take up arms in their defence, and trust their cause and mine once more to heaven;—on that evening I sat sadly in my chamber, having only two of my household 'squires near me, while I revolved in my own troubled and silent thought, how much and vainly I had consulted for the welfare of my subjects; seeking, I appeal to God, only their good, while I was ever, alas! unwillingly working them evil. I thought of the wars

I had been forced into; the peaces I had been compelled to make; the concessions to the Holy Father, that had been followed only by fresh encroachments; and the resistance, that had been punished by severer chastisement; and I sighed as I beheld my shield once more taken from the wall of my chamber. It waxed late, when a page entered, followed by him ye call the sable knight. He advanced in silence, with the bars of his helmet closed. I commanded to place a seat for him: he declined it; waving his hand, but still in silence. I do vouch, noble friends, though the knight met my greeting courteously, there was something chilling in his presence; such as perchance, yourselves may have felt at times.' A responsive shudder among the guests answered him. 'He spoke at length,' continued Raymond. "Lord Count," he said, "thou art about to do battle against thy foes; I offer thee the aid of my lance and sword; perchance thou wilt not find them powerless. But I demand of thee three conditions, on which my service shall be duly tendered;—that thou never demand my name, or ask why my shield bears no cognizance; that thou never require that the bars of my visor be unclosed; and lastly, that if this arm achieve thee victory, thou wilt grant whatever boon I ask, save thine honour, life, and faith." I yielded and——' "This we have heard," said the ancient knight. 'But, lord of Toulonse, thou hast another tale to tell of this stranger knight, or report wrongs thee and him foully?'—'It is true,' said Count Raymond; 'there is a tale—a passage—that did, in a manner, force on me the fear (the feeling I would say) that our dark associate is formed of other mould than mortal men.' 'Reserve the disclosure for a fitter occasion,' said a voice close beside Count Raymond's chair. Count Raymond sank back in his seat, but lifted his eye slowly in the direction whence the voice proceeded.

The sable knight stood there, unannounced, unattended even by the ill-favoured page, his constant companion. At the sound so suddenly heard, many of the knights started on their feet, and unsheathed their daggers ; while others cowered where they sat, and hid their foreheads in their clasped hands for a time. The tent was lit only by one large lamp, suspended from the roof right over the centre of the table where the guests sat ; and, during the earnest conversation between them and count Raymond, the pages had neglected to trim it, so that only a dim and waning light fell on the darkened groupe with their gleaming daggers, and the towering form and ebon-like mail of the sable knight.

"Sir sable knight," said Count Raymond, at length recovering himself, "your appearance amongst us hath been somewhat sudden, but is not the less welcome : I pray you, sit, and partake of our cheer." The figure in the sable armour shook its head in silence. "Sir sable knight, I pledge you in a cup of wine : you will not refuse my pledge?" A silent gesture of disinclination was again the only answer. "By my faith, sir knight, this is somewhat discourteous ; but, if thou wilt neither partake of our feast, nor answer to our fair terms of courtesy, declare, after what manner likes thee best, thy purpose and thy pleasure here." The figure, by silent but emphatic gestures, signified its wish to speak with him alone. Count Raymond's cheek changed its hue at this invitation ; and twenty voices, in eager whispers, murmured, "Go not with him, lord Count, at peril of thy life—or more !" The figure did not utter a sound, but continued to repeat its gestures with such an air of gentle invitation, and such a sorrowful inclination of the head withal, that Raymond, ashamed of his fears, rose from his seat, and, withdrawing the curtain of a recess in the pavilion, entered it, followed by the figure, leaving on the minds of his guests an impression of anxious and indefinable awe. For some time not a word was spoken ; nothing could be heard but

the rustling of the mantles of the guests, as they laid down their untasted wine to gaze on the closed aperture, and then hushed the sound, to watch what might issue from it : but not a breath could be heard—all within the pavilion was as still as death. To their high-wrought anxiety the delay seemed protracted, and their very silence was becoming insupportable to themselves, when suddenly a deep and prolonged groan burst on their ears, and steps were heard passing from the pavilion. There was no restraining them now : they rushed into the recess, where they found only Count Raymond, who, after a hurried inquiry into the cause of their intrusion, and an assurance, in a broken voice, of his safety, returned with them into the pavilion, and took his seat at the board again.

But from that moment the taciturnity of his companion seemed to have possessed him : his goblet stood beside him untouched, and the most earnest and searching inquiries, could not extort from him a syllable relative to his conference with the sable knight. “ Press me no farther, lords,” he said, at length, heavily, “ with questions a solemn oath forbids me to answer. Meanwhile believe this, that, since I was a man, never was I so sore amazed, or in such deep heaviness of spirit : and now methinks it waxes late—a fair good rest to all. Our wearied and wounded host forbid us to invest the Castle of Tarascon on to-morrow ; but on the following day we will march to the assault with all our forces, and shake off the gloom which this strange visitation hath inspired. But, ere we set forth,” he added in a deeper tone, “ we must purify the host, nor hope to prosper with stained hands, and hearts burthened with unatoned guilt. A dark and fearful deed hath been done ; and *one* amongst us must expiate his crime, even the flesh : for the soul, may God absolve it.” He retired, and every knight departed silent and thoughtful to his tent.

The sable knight had returned to his, where, as usual, he found his page, who never quitted it day or night, awaiting him. This unfortunate youth appeared to have been the victim of some deadly distemper: his figure was slender, though somewhat awkward; but his hands, and what could be seen of his face, had the livid and discoloured hue rather of a corse than of a living creature. A bandage was over more than half his face, to conceal the loss of an eye, which had been extinguished by the malignity of the disease; while the other gleamed with a brightness that seemed preternatural, when contrasted with the deadly colour of his features. His shoulders, too, were bent and distorted: and it was not possible to conceive a more ghastly and revolting form than that of the ill-favoured page, whose inseparability from his mysterious master was not, in the minds of those who remarked it, a circumstance likely to diminish the impression caused by his deformity, profound silence, and total abstraction from all human companionship.

As the sable knight entered the tent, the page prepared to touch his harp. "Forbear!" said the knight: "I am not in the vein. What star is that," he continued, looking upward, "that burns so bright in heaven right above the tent?"—"Sages call it Orion," answered the page.—"Are not the pure lights of heaven," said the knight, speaking to himself as was his wont—"are they not weary of looking on the crimes and sorrows of earth? When will they close their bright eyes, and leave men to do the deeds of darkness by the light that best befits them?" A pause followed, for the page never spoke till addressed by his lord. "From whom didst thou learn thy starry lore?" said the knight.—"An ancient monk taught it me, so please you."—"And was it a monk who taught thee to touch thy harp so masterly?"—"I had another teacher for that," replied the youth: "a skilful, but a wondrous harsh one—it was grief."—"I believe thee, in truth," said the knight;

"and never did the hand of pupil counterfeit that of master so well."—"Mournful as its touch is," said the youth, "it hath sometimes won me back from despair."—"And me from madness!" exclaimed the knight, with one of those stormy bursts of terrible emotion, which now no longer startled his unfortunate companion. "Try," he added, "try if the spell be lost!" The page obeyed, and accompanied his harp with a voice whose sweet but wild tones had in them nothing earthly—

Oh, sweet is the feeling, and sweet the hour,
When Fancy, the bounds of existence scorning,
Restores to past visions of joy their power,
• And the twilight of love beams as bright as its morning!

When day sinks low on its pillar of fire,
The sky with amethyst glories is beaming;
And oft, when the light of the soul hath set,
The heart reflects its departed gleaming.

But, oh! how much of the mingled and sad
Revives with the dreams of the *past* in the soul!
How sweet and bitter from Memory's cup
Is the drop that was nectar in Joy's bright bowl!

"Cease thy strain—it is all too light," said the knight. The page sighed. "And yet my lord has loved the praise of beauty well."—"Once," said the knight, in a voice that sounded like a groan: "but, I know not how it is, thy song turns ever on the beauty of man—a dull theme—not on that of women, one more suited to thy sex."—"Nor wonder," said the page, with sudden animation. "From woman beauty is almost demanded; the homely are slighted and neglected. In man we seek but strength, perchance symmetry; but when to these is added beauty, we feel gratitude to nature as for an unsought favour: it is, in truth, gratuitous bounty, and we gaze on it with the same delight that we would on a mountain fertile in roses, or a palace encrusted with gems."—"This is strange speech for one of thy sex to hold," said the knight. The youth was silent.

"Cheer thee, my boy!" said the knight, as if answering his silence. "No woman, in the softness of her sex, could have been a more faithful attendant on a wayward lord than thou hast been on me."—

"Oh, my dear master!" cried the page: and, grasping the knight's hand while he knelt, he pressed his livid lips to it, and bathed it with tears. "I have been a stern master to thee!" said the knight, melting.—"Oh, no; ever most gentle and most gracious!"—"I have but one task more for thee," said the knight, collecting his voice; "and then"—He paused; while the page rose, and folding his hands on his bosom, stood reverently before him. "As we passed the shrine of holy St. Martin, on the other side the Rhone," said the knight, in a hurried voice, "I neglected to pay my devotions there. I am a sinful man, and would employ the orisons of one more pure than myself. Go there, I charge thee, by the dawn, which is now breaking: four men-at-arms shall be thy guard, and thy path lies wide of the Crusaders' post. Offer up thy prayers, and tell thy beads there for thy unhappy master; but, at the peril of thy life, return not hither till the sun hath twice risen on yonder hill." The unfortunate page seemed to listen as to his death's doom. He fell on his knees, apparently in supplication; but at the stamp of the knight's foot he rose trembling, and, bursting into an agony of tears, retired.

The day was now fully broke, and the knight was slowly, and with head declined, pacing his tent, when a herald of Count Raymond appeared at the entrance. The knight raised his head. "Speak thy lord's message, and briefly!" he said.—"My lord," said the herald, bowing, low,—"My lord prays you, Sir sable knight, to pause yet another day on your dreadful purpose; and if then—" The knight waved him off with a gesture of fierce impatience. "Commend me to thy lord," he said; and his better nature struggling within him—"and thank him, good fellow: but tell him, that he look to have a scaffold

reared in the centre of his host to-day ; for blood that is flowing now in living veins must stain it ere many hours be past.”—“ Am I to do no other message to my lord ?” said the herald, with sad reluctance. The sable knight paused. “ Tell him,” said he at length, “ that I pray him to send some holy man to receive my confession, and, if it be possible, to absolve my soul: Let none else, at the peril of their lives, approach this tent to-day !” The herald departed.

The sable knight’s request was not found easy to be complied with : not an ecclesiastic in the host of Count Raymond would undertake the task. But, as the demand had been so earnestly and solemnly made, the Count despatched a herald with a trumpet to the Castle of Tarascon, praying them within of Christian grace to send some holy man to shrieve a penitent at point to die, and promising on his knightly word that he should have safe conduct to and from his camp.

It was late in the evening when the holy man arrived ; it was the Monk of Montcalm. He was conducted immediately to the tent of the sable knight, which had been inaccessible to human foot but his all that day.

Some hours elapsed, and at their close the monk and his penitent were still together ; the proud and lofty form of the knight kneeling at the feet of the pale monk, who, in the progress of his confession, (with all its increasing horrors,) sat with uplifted eyes and locked hands as he listened.

“ She promised,” continued the penitent, “ that she would shew my pre-doomed victim on the very night that the sacrifice was to be made ; and she asked me for my ring, and swore she would produce it on that night ! She did : but it was my bridal night !—and the victim was to be my bride ! And such were her credentials from heaven or hell, that I believed her. She recalled the very words of my birth-vow—that I was sworn to sacrifice the last survivor of mine enemy’s race !—and that last survivor *was she* whose hand I had clasped at the altar that

morn! I remember rushing into the chamber that night more like a fiend than a bridegroom. There was but one way to absolve me of my oath, and yet to shun the impossible crime: I drew my dagger and——” (the monk caught his arm)—“plunged it into mine own bosom! She saw it. Deeming me mad, she sprang up and struggled with me for the bloody weapon. I tried to inflict another—a mortal wound; and in the struggle——” “Hold! hold!” cried the monk, gasping.—“It was not I!—not I,” cried the penitent in a piercing tone of agony: “her own hand dealt the blow! But, when I saw the bosom, so long pictured in my visions, pierced—when I beheld the blood flow, and the body fall—I rushed from the chamber with the speed and the despair of a fallen spirit hurled from Heaven. My wounds bled fast; I heeded them not, but ran on till I fell exhausted. After that I remember nought. I was for some months, as they told me, and as I had fearful cause to believe, where the unhappy seek to be. The maniac sorceress, whatever she was, who had urged me to my horrible fate, watched over my returning health and reason; but it was for her own deadly purposes, as a witch watches her caldron till the waters seethe and the flames sparkle to her devilish will. She nursed me, too, in that unhallowed place, the ruined tower of Hugo, and gave me for mine attendant that *ill-favoured page* who hath furnished such matter of scoff and slander, but who was, in truth, a most gentle and feeling boy. I sent him hence but this morning that he might not see me perish.”—“Go on,” said the monk, in a tone of singular calmness.—“I have nought more to disclose,” said the penitent, “but this: that, when restored to bodily, not to mental health, I demanded my horse and arms. They were ready for me, as if raised by magic power; for that mysterious being seems always to have wealth at her will, though not at her use. But when I declared my purpose of joining the Crusaders once more, and added the wish

that the first lance levelled by the foe might find my heart, or the first arrow my brain, she prostrated herself before me, and, with such inconceivable agonies of supplication, implored that I should not draw brand against Count Raymond of Toulouse ; that, all-careless where I fought, coveting only death, and deeming that I might as soon find it from a Crusader's hand as another's, and reckless where, so it was found, I offered the aid of mine arm to Count Raymond, on condition——" "I know the rest," said the monk, "by true report."—"Then thou knowest that I have sought Death in battle—yea, wooed him—but he has not come to me. The arrows missed me as they flew ; the swords struck against me as if they were rushes : I could not die—yet I will not live :—and I have demanded of Count Raymond, as a boon——" "That which he never shall grant !" said the monk, rising hastily, as some distant recollections rolled like a mist over his soul ; while amid them he thought he could trace clear images of past events, for he had been acquainted with the Count of Toulouse in his youth ; and the confession he had heard awakened the thought of a discovery all but miraculous.—"Holy father, mock not a desperate man !" said the penitent.—"Son," replied the monk, in a solemn voice, "by thy soul's safety—by thy hopes of Heaven and mercy—by the powers of the church, in whose name I pronounce thee absolved of all crime—I adjure thee to remain here in peace till my return, and banish despair from thy heart the while !"

He did not return : but in a short space Count Raymond, rushing into the tent, strained in his arms his first-born, "his beautiful, his brave ;" and in mingled agonies of contrition and fondness demanded pardon of his child, while he heaped blessings on his head. The astonished youth replied not, but knelt in reverence to receive the blessings so tenderly yet so mysteriously bestowed.—"On me be thy curse, my son !" cried Raymond, when he recovered his voice : "mine be the guilt of that vow that I solemnly bound on thy

soul whilst yet a child ! Amid the flames of my burning castle, amid the murder of thy mother and thy brothers, I found only thee and my youngest boy surviving ; thou, my Paladour, wast then near five years old, thy brother but an infant ; amid blood and flames, in my heart's despair, I made thee swear to avenge the slaughter of thy house, even on the last descendant of its enemy's race. Oh, may God absolve me for a sin so deadly. Then, taking thee, my eldest boy, in mine arms, while the faithful menial, who had saved thee both, followed with thine infant brother in hers, I sought shelter for the night where I might. Amid the dark hills that surround the castle of Courtenaye we were assailed by ruffians : I fought till I fell ; though never had mine arm struck with such strength as it did for thee, its precious burthen. I recovered from the trance, into which I had sunk through loss of blood ; but I recovered to find myself childless. The attendant had fled with my infant at the beginning of the fray, and thou hadst wandered, or been borne away : nor ever did thine unhappy father hear aught of either till this hour. One hope I cherished, till that hope, long deferred, became almost despair. I had, by a preparation taught me by a skilful monk, impressed on the shoulders of each of my sons the mark of an arrow in colours indelible, trusting that if ever"—Sir Paladour bared his shoulder, and displayed the mark, and, yielding to all the filial delight of recognition, he threw himself voluntarily into the arms of his father : then, hastily withdrawing himself, " My lord and father," he cried, " since it is mine honoured fate to call you so, haste, in the name of Heaven, and save a worthier and happier son than I. That Sir Amirald, my noble father, who was my brother in arms before I knew him, my brother in blood on our disastrous progress to the Castle of Courtenaye, chafed with his heavy armour, threw it off to bathe in a stream we were passing, and I saw his shoulder bear the same mark as mine."—" And where, where is he now ?" cried Raymond,

trembling in the new-felt agonies of the paternal heart.

"He fought yesterday beneath the banners of De Foix," said Paladour; "and, late in the day, I saw him borne a prisoner into the Castle of Tarascon. Full surely will the Crusaders wreak their vengeance on him as a recreant to their cause, sparing neither for his valour nor his early youth."—"Away! to horse, to horse! Mine armour—let my banner fly!" shouted Raymond. "Gaston—Bernard—Guy—slaves! why loiter ye now? Thou, Gaston," as they hurried to the tent, "hast a sharp spur: ride, ride, good fellow, for life and death, to the walls of Tarascon, and summon De Foix and De Comminges, as they are gallant lords, as they are Christian men, to join us with all their forces beneath the towers of the Castle by dawn. Tell them they ride in rescue of the noblest knight that ever buckled on harness beneath their banners—my son, my son," he exclaimed, bitter tears of agony starting from his eyes. "And thou, fair son," he said, "quit thy fearful purpose, and strike with me in aid of thy brother: thou wilt not rend thy father's heart the very hour thou wast first folded to it."—"My lord and father," said the youth sadly and fixedly, "I must needs resign my purpose, since I may not dishonour by a felon doom the noble house I spring from; but seek thy happiness from Amirald, not from me. That my soul hath shaken off the burthen of guilt predoomed and preternatural, I bless heaven and the saints; but life, love, and hope, blasted for ever, would even my father wish me to live?"

"Hark!" cried Raymond, "what tumult is this?—who breaks in on us? Merciful Heaven, what figure is this—and wherefore?" As he spoke, a figure darted into the tent, and, with a shriek which mingled joy and agony, clung round Paladour. In the dishevelled dress of a page, mingled with the flowing hair, the panting bosom, and the thrilling voice of a woman, Raymond saw only an increase of mys-

tery and amazement ; but Paladour beheld in the page, whose bandage was removed, and whose livid dye had been washed off, his bride, his victim—Isabelle of Courtenaye.

The shock seemed too much for both. After twice enfolding each other—after twice holding each other at short distance, that they might gaze, and drink in recognition at eyes that thirsted for the view—Paladour at length uttered “Thou livest :” and as Isabelle, exhausted by emotion, sank on her knees, he sank along with her.

The Monk of Montcalm, who had accompanied the *ill-favoured page* to the tent, had been apprized on the way of her story, as on the intelligence of the intended sacrifice of Paladour she had hastened back from her prescribed pilgrimage, entreated but a moment’s interview with him, and pledged her life for the effect of her presence. This was communicated by the monk to Raymond ; and the blessings of a father were breathed on the heads of both.

The trumpets of Count Raymond sounded to horse, while the lovers still knelt before him. “Oh, what means that fearful sound ?” cried Isabelle, clinging to Paladour. “Art thou to be thus found and lost in a moment ?”

“Fear not, my love,” cried Paladour, “the might of many is in my arm, the spirit of an armed host within my breast, since I beheld thee. I go no more a desperate reckless man to battle : I clasp a bride, and go to save a brother.”

“Go then, my lover, my hero, my husband,” said Isabelle, the pride of her lordly line flushing a cheek long pale : “let not the trumpet call thee twice !”—“Were it the tramp of doom,” cried Paladour, while he hastened to clasp his helmet and gorget the while, “I should not obey the summons, till I have heard how I am thus blest as by miracle.”—“It will be a tale for our after-life,” said Isabelle, “to tell thee how I was borne insensible from the castle by that evil woman, in the sad distraction of the hour when

my unhappy kinsman perished: She had many in the castle to work her will, and there was none to oppose her. Thee, too, whom she found breathless and bleeding in her way, she caused to be borne to that dreary tower thou rememberest. I have often thought there was goodness in that fearful woman to tend us as she did; but for some dark purpose of her own, it was suspended or overruled. I recovered; but only to see thy noble mind a wreck, my Paladour; and, with bitterer anguish still, to feel that my presence but thickened the cloud that overshadowed thy soul. That fearful being is skilful, as well as wicked, beyond her species. She taught me to stain my visage, and disguise and disfigure my form, that I might still be near thee without danger to thy tottering reason; she counselled me to follow thee in the guise of the hideous and disfeatured being I appeared; and sometimes my harp, and sometimes my voice, had that power for which I bore my degraded state with joy, and wept in ecstasy when I was alone."

"But why not sooner recognize me, my beloved, my bride?"

"Alas! my love, the sound of woman's name, or woman's love, overshadowed thy soul with deeper darkness. For years would I have watched, and wept, and prayed in my disguise: but now thou knowest me, my Paladour?" she cried, fixing her bright and swimming eyes on him as she spoke.

"Know thee!" cried Paladour, clasping her to his bosom, "know thee! Were I to live for ages, never could I know the truth of woman's faith, the strength of woman's constancy, the power and the purity of woman's love!"

A herald, as he spoke, appeared at the entrance of the tent. "I go," cried Paladour, rushing forth, while Isabelle, who had no other favour now to offer, cut off a lock of her long-neglected hair, and waved it towards him as he flung himself on his war-steed. "Set on, my noble father!" cried Paladour, riding

by the side of the Count.—“ Hold, fair son !” said Raymond ; “ methinks a messenger rides towards us. Come ye,” he said, as the messenger spurred his wearied steed onward, “ come ye from the city of Tarascon, from our noble brothers-in-arms De Foix and De Comminges ? or come ye from the Castle, where the Crusaders have betaken them ?”

“ I come, my lord, from the city of Tarascon, whence the forces of De Foix and De Comminges are pouring forth fast in aid of the assault. But, noble lord, as I passed the Castle of Tarascon, there were strange tidings abroad. The Crusaders are said to be dying by hundreds within the walls : the gates are thrown open ; and all who can yet escape are flying from it for life !”

“ On ! my noble friends—set on ! Fellow, I will reward thee well ; but, hark thee, hast thou no other tidings ?”

“ None, my noble lord ; save that, as I rode past the Castle, I saw an iron pillar reared on its loftiest turret, and piles of faggots heaped around it : for, live or die, the Crusaders have sworn to burn their prisoners to ashes ere the sun reach noon.”

Count Raymond dashed his spurs into his steed’s flank. “ Away ! away !” he cried, “ tarry not for De Foix’s loitering troops !—tarry not for mortal aid ! *He burns*—the pile is blazing while I speak ! Gentlemen, noble knights, *fathers*, set on !—on, in the name of God !” The army was all in motion as he spoke. “ Where is my son Paladour !” cried the agitated parent.—“ By thy side, my lord and father.” —“ Back, back, I charge thee, lest I lose ye both. Thou wilt not ! Well, then, win thy brother’s life, boy, if thou canst ; but in the strife, spare, spare thine own as *mine* !”

CHAPTER XVI.

My senses blaze : my last, I know is come,
 My last of hours. 'Tis wondrous horrid !—Now
 My lawless love and boundless power reproach me !
LEE'S Mithridates.

THE Castle of Tarascon was that day indeed a scene of horror. The Crusaders, on their defeat, had thrown themselves within its walls in distraction, less at the danger that threatened them from the investing armies, than at the disgrace of their overthrow : Prince Lewis, in sullen despair, had shut himself up in his chamber, and menaced death to any intruder. The Bishop of Toulouse alone preserved his resolution. He appointed the following morning for performing the obsequies of the Count de Monfort ; and, to heighten the solemnity, resolved to celebrate high mass in the chapel of the Castle, inviting the Crusaders to partake of the holy rite. This arranged, the bishop, summoning Lambert de Limons, toiled all day like a common man, in inspecting and strengthening the fortifications of the Castle ; and towards evening retired to write letters, and dispatch couriers in every direction, to summon instant aid.

While he was thus employed, Lambert de Limons loudly murmured against the number of prisoners that were within the walls, and demanded, if the attack on the castle were turned into a siege, how so many useless mouths were to be fed ?—" We will take order for that," said the bishop. " Go thou on the instant, and offer the prisoners their choice, either to renounce their heretical faith, or prepare to be dealt with as heretics, when mass is said to-morrow."—" My lord," said Lambert, reverently, " there be many of the Crusaders prisoners in the town ; and

how if the Count de Foix should retaliate, and deal to them such measure as we deal to ours?"—"If it be so," said the bishop, with a sanctimonious air, "they are sure of heaven, perishing as martyrs in its cause. But, bold Lambert," he added with a smile, "thou art scarce as wise as brave, or thou wouldst know that the avarice of De Foix and his associate, are ample pledge for the safety of their prisoners. They will not lightly sacrifice lives, the least precious of which will be ransomed for a thousand marks of silver; while our sorry prey would be dearly redeemed at a liard for the whole community."—"But how, my lord, if they should accept the condition?"—"I trust their obstinacy for that," said the bishop. "Go, and do my bidding."

The Monk of Montcalm, who was present at this conference, stood aghast till, startled by the departure of De Limons, he attempted to remonstrate with the bishop. "It is not possible," he said—"it is not possible that you can harbour such horrible purpose! You speak but to terrify these wretched men."—"Thou wilt see that by to-morrow's dawn," replied the bishop, "an the smoke of the faggots do not dim thine eyes!"—"It is not possible!" repeated the monk. "The good God of mercy will not permit such cruelty to be wrought in his name. Also, this thing will be sin unto me, seeing I have pledged my faith as a Christian, to the prisoners for their safety." The bishop answered him in the words of the Abbot of St. Denis, when the king of England pretended a scruple of conscience in recognizing Pope Innocent, in preference to his rival Anaclet, "*Songez seulement comment vous repondrez à Dieu de vos autres péchés : pour celui-là, je m'en charge.*"—"Yet beware what thou doest, lord bishop!" said the monk, trembling with fear and resentment. "A noble knight, once a Crusader, is among thine intended victims, and——" "He shall perish first!" said the bishop, who burned to wreak his vengeance on Genevieve through her lover. "Not

all the lands that Raymond's victory yesterday hath won back for him, should buy that youth's life for an hour!" The monk redoubled his supplications.—"Thou hast prayed to marble saints, and they perchance have heard thee," said the bishop; "but now thou hast to deal with one of more impenetrable material than marble or adamant."—"And they must burn, youth and maiden, warrior and infant!" cried the monk. "Mercy, mercy! dread lord," he cried, falling at the bishop's feet, while tears streamed down his hoary beard—"mercy, in the name of the All-merciful!—on thyself, as well as on thy captives! Oh, how canst thou call for mercy who grantest none!"—"Debase not thyself in vain!" said the bishop. "Go shrieve the penitent who waits for thee in the camp of Count Raymond!" The monk arose from his knees, and waved his withered arm towards heaven. "I am guiltless of their blood!" he cried: "but for thee, thou man of cruelty—for so I dare call thee in thy pride—thou who rendest the flock thou shouldst feed, look if thou be not soon repaid as thou hast deserved!" He stood near a casement that looked on the walls of Tarascon, as he spoke. "Thou didst send that Sir Ambrose to treat for the ransom of the Crusaders; and, lo! I see a gibbet erected on the bartizan, and they are dragging towards it one who struggles."—"Are they about to hang him?" said the bishop, without raising his eyes from the letter he was writing.—"On the instant, unless a swift messenger be sent to stop their cruelty."—"The rope will have done its office ere a messenger could reach them," said the bishop, coolly.—"In the name of Heaven, then, let a mass be said for his soul!" cried the monk.—"That were needless too, for without all doubt he will die in his heretic faith," answered the bishop.—"Holy Heaven!" cried the poor monk, "can one hear of the fate of a dying wretch thus unmoved! Now they have dragged him to the gibbet! what strength despair can give! He hath burst from them—he grapples with them—now

they drag him forward on his knees—he clings to the gibbet's foot—they cannot untwine his grasp—the rope is wound round his neck.”—“Good night, Sir Ambrose,” said the bishop, without raising his head : “thou hast been somewhat troublesome and useless of late ; and I sent thee of an errand where thy foul tongue and fierce temper have met their meed. Do-tard, stand not there wringing thine hands ! The herald of Count Raymond hath sounded his trumpet twice. Go, and assoil thy living patient : the dead are past thy cares.”—“I go,” said the Monk of Montcalm, “and Heaven grant that I may shed around his death-hour, that peace which, I fear me, bloody prelate, will be denied to thine !”—“Maulleon,” said the bishop (without noticing his departure) to one of his military attendants, “thou sawest to-day, as I passed through the hall of the castle, where the prisoners were assembled ere they were conveyed to the dungeon—thou sawest I fixed mine eyes on a woman who stood amongst them ?”—“I did, my lord, and understood the signal well.”—“How now, thou insolent knave ?—the woman I speak of was neither young nor fair ; she was distinguished only by her grey hairs. Go, fetch her hither instantly !”

In a few moments she stood in his presence ; and the bishop made a signal to his attendants to quit the chamber. While removing her mantle she gazed fixedly on him, disclosing the visage he expected to behold. “It is thou, then ?” he cried ; “but wherefore art thou here ?”—“Wherefore is the vulture ever near the prey ?” replied the female. “I was wandering near the skirts of the battle yesterday : they took me for an Albigeois,—and I am here.”—“And here, then, thy life of mystery is doomed to close : the hand of Heaven hath overtaken thee at last !”—“Name not Heaven,” said the female, “for what hast thou to do with it ? It is mirth for the fiends when hypocrites talk of Heaven.”—“Thou canst best tell tidings of thine own associates,” said

the bishop : " they will, ere long, welcome the arrival of one who can teach even *them* new lessons of crime."—" Woe to those who first taught *me* !" answered the female.—" Out on thee, hag !" cried the prelate : " thy crimes were wrought in the mere wantonness of thy depravity ! Was it not by thy devices, that the Lord of Courtenaye expired in flames, and the Lady Isabelle and her bridegroom perished ?"—" Yet Paladour fought but yesterday beneath the banners of Count Raymond ; and Isabelle, in menial habit, sleeps this night at the feet of her husband."—" What sayest thou?—but thou *canst not* speak truth !" cried the bishop. " Miserable woman ! as thou hast hope of life, or of mercy, speak the truth !"—" Hope of life ? bribe the fools who value it :—of mercy ? who ever sought it at *thy* hands ? But I *will* speak—not for thy will, but mine own. There were three on earth on whom I had vowed revenge : on two it hath been fulfilled, and on the third it *shall* be. Far above the wretched maniac as they stood in state and power, mine hand hath reached them. I knew the vow which was bound on Paladour's soul in childhood, and from childhood I watched him. I led him to the Castle of Courtenaye, when his age was ripe to fulfil it. I obtained admission there by working on the guilty terrors of the Lord of Courtenaye, and my admission facilitated my purpose."—" Hold, wretch ! Was all that thou shewedst us in the vaults of the castle that night, mere illusion !"—" Not *all*," replied his companion, with a withering smile. " Paladour beheld the bleeding form of his pale bride ; and to thee I displayed the triple crown of flames, which shall, ere long, I trust, empale thy burning brows. My spells wrought—the hour arrived, the blow was struck."—" And yet thou sayest Paladour and Isabelle live ?"—" I crushed them while they contended with my purpose ; I relented when they became its victims : nor were they ever the objects, but the implements, of mine hatred : and when the youth purposed to join the

Crusaders, I shuddered to add to his imaginary guilt, the burthen of real parricide ; for, had he slain Raymond of Toulouse, he would have slain his own father. And now, have I not kept my vow, and wreaked my vengeance ? The Lord of Courtenaye perished in flames and torture ; Raymond was punished by twenty years' privation of his child : there remains but one more victim, and that victim is—thyself !”—“ Announce my doom, most potent prophetess ! most sage sorceress !” cried the bishop, with a disdainful laugh.—“ Thou shalt appear in the spirit before the judgment-seat, or ere to-morrow's sun be set——”—“ Maniac ! mendicant ! witching hag !” cried the proud prelate in scorn, “ whose menaces are despicable as thyself art loathsome, is it thou who darest to predict my doom ?”—“ Nor maniac, mendicant, nor witch,” cried the female, her voice swelling to a tone of fearful power : “ it is *Marie de Mortimar* who speaks thy doom, and defies her own !”

She snatched a lamp from the table as she spoke, and stood full before him. “ This was the face that men thought fair, till thou didst cover it with dishonour ; this was the form that was pure, till thou didst debase it ! Oh !” she shrieked, “ that I could thus lay bare my soul before thee, it would be the reflection of thine own—despair !”

The bishop's blood ran cold in his veins. He retreated some paces ; but he tried to overcome his fear by rage. “ Vision from the grave !” he exclaimed, “ abhorred spectre ! thus hast thou often glared in my dreams ; but thou shalt haunt me no longer, waking or slumbering ! Ho ! Mauleon, Savari !” he shouted to his pages, stamping, “ bear this hag to the dungeon !—No :” he paused ; “ she shall not hold intercourse with agents from earth or hell ! Is there a nook in these walls where she may be kept in safety, and apart from the other prisoners ?”—“ So please you, my lord, there is one adjacent to this chamber.”—“ Doth it communicate with

any other apartment in the castle?"—"With none, reverend lord, save with the chapel, which hath been long deserted."—"Bear her thither on the instant! I will try whether the foul shape, with which that fiendish spirit is entrusted, be proof against the flames to-morrow!"

Marie de Mortemar departed without uttering a word; but she gave a glance, as she parted, that the bishop, in his pride, shrank from. He stood appalled for a moment; then issuing orders that the pile should be lit as mass was said on the morrow, he retired to rest; but not without a previous and minute inspection of the planetary heavens, now in their midnight glory. All there appeared favourable, as all on earth was calm. There was not a sound from the camp of Count Raymond or the city of Tarascon, though the moving of the glimmering lights in each told of preparation all alive.

The bishop threw himself on his bed, giving orders to the pages, who slept at his feet, to wake him before dawn. The morning broke, and preparations were making in different parts of the castle for two very different celebrations, though the cruel superstition of the age deemed them the same in religious importance and efficacy.

The chapel, long neglected, was now, like a banished favourite recalled, arrayed with all the pomp the time could allow of, by the ecclesiastics of the bishop's train, who well knew how to direct such preparation. Meanwhile, an iron stake had been fixed in the massive roof of stone with which the highest turret of the castle was covered; the prisoners, who were all Albigeois, verifying to a man the bishop's prediction of their obstinacy, and announcing their resolution to perish in the flames, rather than renounce their faith.

The obsequies of the count de Monfort, whose body, clothed in armour, with a crucifix placed in the hands, lay on a bier in the centre of the aisle, were first performed, the bishop and all the ecclesi-

astics chaunting the "*Dirige gressus meos.*" High mass was then celebrated by the bishop, with all the pomp of the Catholic ritual; and, after the distribution of the consecrated elements to the ecclesiastics, the laity approached to partake of the bread. Hundreds of armed figures (Prince Lewis and Sir Aymer alone being absent) crowded round the altar; and many a stately head and stubborn knee was bent, and many a gauntleted hand locked in earnest devotion, while the holy rites went on. In a short time a slight confusion was remarked: some who had partaken, instead of retiring to their seats in the aisle, remained, as if unable to quit the spot; some, who still knelt, seemed, after a few efforts, to quit their posture, to sink still lower; while others, who had retired a few steps, sat down in the aisle, and resting their drooping heads on their hands, appeared falling into a lethargy.

The ecclesiastic who held the patin to the bishop, plucked his robe, as if to mark these extraordinary appearances; but in doing so his countenance assumed a strange expression, and he fell speechless beside the altar. Two who attempted to raise him, continued to bend over him helplessly, as if unable to raise themselves from their incumbent posture; and a fourth, dashing the holy element he bore to the ground, and pointing to it with a look of horror, sank beside them. The symptoms every moment became more unequivocal: those who with eyes uplifted in devotion were partaking of the rite, felt them fixed; those who had clasped their hands in prayer, felt them stiffening; while loathing sickness or excruciating pain marked the different but fatal character of the malady, as it operated on different constitutions. And those who had not yet participated, believing the groans and vehement gestures of the sufferers to proceed only from the intensity of their devotion, pressed frantically on to the altar, to partake of the sacred enthusiasm the rites had inspired.

At this moment the day broke fully, and, through the many-tinted windows of the chapel, flung ghastly light on the features of the dying.

At length the terrible conviction burst on all: a cry of horror rang through the church, and the dreadful sounds of "Poison, poison! the holy elements are poisoned!" echoed on every side, and in every accent of despair and death. Through dead and dying—the convulsed, who caught his robes in their agonies, and the still conscious, who implored his benediction in vain—the Bishop of Toulouse burst his way on the first conviction; and, on reaching his apartment, applied the strongest antidotes that the skill of the age could furnish, and with which he had always the precaution to be amply provided. The very first attempts proved their total inefficacy, and the bishop felt "that he must appear in the spirit before the judgment-seat, ere that day's sun was set." His resolution did not desert him for a moment in this dreadful emergency; and, subduing all expression of the torture that already began to prey like a living fire on his vitals, he commanded his attendants instantly to bring Marie de Mortemar before him, still cherishing the belief congenial to all proud and powerful minds, that he bore "a charmed life," and that means, even supernatural, would yet interpose for its preservation. As Marie de Mortemar was led into the chamber, the triumph that sparkled in her eye, and dilated her whole form, restored to her wasted frame somewhat of the beauty by which it had once been eminently distinguished. This identity with her former self made the bishop shudder. Past crimes and horrors seemed present again, as she stood before him. "Fiend," said the bishop, raising his livid eyes—"fiend, this is thy work!"—"Mine," she answered firmly—"mine; and the last act of my life is its most glorious. This is indeed dying worthy of the cause for which alone I have groaned under the burthen of life for twenty years. But for thy foolish malice, that confined me in the

neighbourhood of the chapel, instead of remanding me to my dungeon, I had never had such ample power of vengeance: the shaft was aimed at thee, but its flight hath laid many low.”—“Boast of thy crime,” said the bishop, “while thou mayest; but a few moments, and thou shalt expiate it in flames.”—“Better perish in flames, than live to be their fuel for ever and ever,” said Marie de Mortemar. “Hag, thou liest!” cried the prelate. “I never feared man nor fiend. Wherever my disembodied spirit may wander, there it will *rule*: I shall be among the spirits of the earth’s high lords—the ancient conquerors—those who, like me, conceived purposes too vast for earth, but who will realize them in other regions! If the spirit survive death, its power will survive also: I shall sit with kings.”—“Thou wilt, indeed, sit with the disturbers of the earth—the defacers of God’s creation!” cried Marie de Mortemar, fixing her eyes on his convulsed features; “but where are they?” “Vile hag!” cried the bishop, “I sent not for thee to ban and rave! Thou, who knowest the power of that deadly venom, knowest perhaps its antidote: disclose it, and I will exchange thy stake for a throne. I dread not death, but I would live till my sound reached to the earth’s limits. Give me life, and I will reward thee beyond all thy delirious dreams of vengeance.”—“Such antidote I have,” she cried; “but thou shalt never taste its virtue! Oh, hope not, hope not, man of pride and power, that the earth’s treasure could win that secret from me! I tell thee, were thy body formed of adamant, the drug is so potent it would expel thy spirit from it ere an hour be past.”—“Seize the sorceress, and chain her to the stake!” cried the bishop of Toulouse, collapsing in mortal sickness. “I will see her burned with mine own eyes!”—“There, too, thou art baffled and deceived!” cried Marie, “thine eyes will close in agony ere a faggot can be lit, ere a flame can be raised! Hark, hark to the trumpets of Raymond of Toulouse! His catapults will shake these

walls ere the words have parted from my lips ! See how fast the bands of De Foix and De Comminges pour from Tarascon, and all against this distracted castle, filled with the dying and the dead. Hark," she cried, listening to the screams of horror and agony that burst from the chapel below, "hark to thy knell. Thine enemies are around thee—thine allies in blood and crime are perishing. Chain me to the stake: burn me an ye will ; but, ere I am in ashes, thou wilt be in flames." The trumpets of Count Raymond were indeed heard as she spoke ; and the attendants, quitting hold of her at the sound, rushed towards a casement to ascertain the truth of what she said. Marie de Mortemar seized the moment of her release : she tore back a casement that opened on a bartizan ; for a moment she stood there gazing downward—"I come, I come," she cried ; then waving her arm in the direction of the chapel, from which the cries of horror and death at that moment redoubled—"Follow—follow," she cried, "follow all of you—he waits for you!" and, flinging herself from the bartizan, her body was dashed to atoms on the rocky terrace. The bishop viewed her fate with less emotion than he heard her tidings. "Look forth," he said, "look forth, and see if her intelligence be true :—a trumpet seems to ring in mine ears ; but whether it be that of the enemy, or of doom, I know not—nor reck !"

The attendants looked forth, and beheld all the plain overspread with the array of Count Raymond, who led the van at full speed ; while the troops of De Foix and his associate were pouring fast from the city of Tarascon, their lances gleaming in the morning sun. "They come!" cried the attendants ; "and who is there to meet them?—a dying band, and a defenceless castle!"—"Am I not here," cried the bishop—"am I not here still? Cravens, cowards, fetch mine armour!" and he applied his hands to his robes, as if bracing on his armour. Of his four attendants, three fled as he spoke, to make des-

perate defence: one alone remained to watch the last moments of the mighty prelate, on whose associations the sound of war operated even amid the agonies of death.

“Charge! charge!” he cried; “we shall win the day yet: can we fail with such noble aid? Thou art with us, Simon de Monfort—and thou, Enguerrand de Vitry, and thou, Raymond of Toulouse, restored to the banners thou once foughtest beneath so bravely! Why comes that pale Lord of Courtenaye,” he cried, his thoughts all running on the dead,—“and that strange bridegroom and his bleeding bride? Well, let them ride up: we are a gallant company. Charge! charge your lances at their throats! Hold! who is the leader that waves ye on? Ride not up that precipice! see what yawns below! He doffs his helmet. See—see his visage! Follow not his beckoning. He plunges—and we must plunge too—for ever, for ever! Dark spirit, I will grapple with thee!” He fell—and expired.

Meanwhile the castle was one wide scene of consternation, horror, and helplessness. Lambert de Limons had perished; the men-at-arms had lowered the draw-bridge to effect their escape from what they believed to be diabolical power. The fierce and rapid assault of Count Raymond gave no choice, and met no opponent: his troops in a moment deluged the castle with a tide of unresisted victory. The surviving Crusaders made good the postern with their lives, to secure the safety of Prince Lewis. The Monk of Montcalm made his way to the chapel, to shrieve the dying and say masses for the dead. Count Raymond and Paladour hastened to the turret, where the victims were already chained to the stake. Raymond stood exhausted; while Paladour, with one strong grasp, rent Amirald’s chain; and would have folded his brother to his heart, had not Amirald, bursting from his arms, first struggled to break those of Genevieve.



It was but a short space after these events, that Isabelle of Courtenaye, restored to her honours and wealth, and reunited to Paladour, was twining the dark tresses of Genevieve, whom she termed "dear lady and sister," with the wreaths of pearl that formed part of her splendid bridal array.

The espousals of Paladour and Amirald were held in the territorial Castle of Raymond of Toulouse. The Abbot of Normoutier (though the younger pair were heretical) spoke the nuptial benediction; and Sir Aymer du Chastelroi gave away Genevieve.

We pause not to describe the splendour of the bridal, nor to relate how many valiant sons and beautiful daughters sprang from those auspicious nuptials: but we must record a circumstance "more germane" to our tale—that the difference of birth and creed was never known to disturb the affection that subsisted between the high-born Lady of Courtenaye and the humble bride of Amirald.

Pierre, the pastor, lived honoured and cherished in the Count's palace, long enough to feel the little hands of Amirald's and Genevieve's offspring placed between his—and then departed in peace and hope. His body, as a heretic's, was not permitted to lie in consecrated ground: it was interred without the walls of the city of Toulouse, and a plain stone bore this inscription—" *Petrus Vallensis.*" A few months after his interment, the Monk of Montcalm, returning from a distant pilgrimage, halted near this stone: it was twilight,—and he asked a passenger to explain the characters to him. The passenger told him, that the remains of Pierre the pastor rested beneath the stone on which his staff was struck. "Then, truly," said the monk, "I will tell a bead or two, and utter a prayer for him—heretic as he was—ere I quit this spot." He knelt as he spoke, and the passenger went his way. The next morning he returned by chance, and saw the lifeless body of the

monk, bent, as if in prayer, on the tomb-stone of the pastor. With his staff he had made shift to inscribe in the dust near him, "*Anima mea, cum anima tuâ, heu multum deflende ! pacem eternam consequatur ;*"—thus, in his last moments, testifying his attachment to the pastor's character, if not to his creed. May those of different faiths, like them, imitate their tolerance, and embrace their example !

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THE ALBIGENSES.

CHAPTER I.

—— We cannot disjoin wedlock,
'Tis of heaven's fastening. well may we raise jars,
Jealousies, strifes, heartburning disagreements,
Like a thick scurf o'er life, as did our master
Upon that patient miracle.

MIDDLETON'S *Witches*.

THE bridal of Sir Paladour de la Croix Sanglante and the lady Isabelle was held with a magnificence suitable to the state and wealth of the bride, and the merit and valour of the bridegroom. After the marriage ceremony, performed by the Monk of Montcalm, there was a gorgeous feast; and then the company assembled in the hall of the castle to dance, the bride and bridegroom, according to the custom of the times and of many following, being the leaders in the

ball. The feudal hall presented a rude and grand consistency:—the fire supplied with vast blocks went roaring and blazing up the wide and grateless chimney; the chimney-piece, a noble work of antique art, adorned with rich sculptures in wood of men and animals, demons and saints, fruits and foliage, heraldic emblems and sentences from Scripture, wrought with rich and fantastic luxuriance of ornament, rose like a monument to the height of thirty feet; its stories (as they might be called), with their entablatures and flourishments, tapering as they ascended, till the topmost carving almost touched the cornice of the hall, loaded like it with heavy, fantastic, but most rich sculpturing in wood, “all made out of the carver’s brain.” There was not, perhaps, a right angle in the walls of the apartment; but, of its polygon figure, every pannel was either hung with rich tapestry, or framed of wood so polished and wrought, that the eye turned with delight from gold and gaudy figures, to repose on the dark hue and strong relief of the alternate compartment.

A “liveried army” of domestics, stationed in recesses, held waxen torches, whose light, like banners in a field, streamed forward or backward with the movements of the dancers and the impulse with which they swayed the air; and those movements so stately, yet so expressive—the sweeping robes of the ladies, the gentle tread of the knights, the sonorous rustle of the long-depending garments on the inlaid floor, from which the rushes had here and there been swept, mingled with the clank of the small spurs which their partners wore even on that occasion, made meet accompaniment to the strains of the minstrels; who leaned from their carved and gilded gallery amid the pillars of the lordly hall, to witness that luxury of motion which they participated while they inspired. And the vast uncurtained window, on whose gorgeous and emblazoned panes the admitted moon shed her full light, tinting them with purple, vermillion, and gold, and then resting in pale and placid glory on some uncoloured pane, seemed to make heaven a joyous wit-

ness of that festival : and within the deep recesses of those windows, on high-piled and costly cushions, sank beauty, panting from the delicious exercise of the dance ; while youthful knights, “ all on the wanton rushes laid them down,” and pointing to the felicity of Paladour and Isabelle, did then most effectively plead for the completion of their own : while, through the low-arched doors that opened in sundry directions, was often caught, by the light of iron cressets, or the flash of torches borne by passing domestics, the sight of the menials of the household dancing in groups, to strains more homely and with steps less graceful, but with hearts as light as any in that gay assembly.

The Lord of Courtenaye, seated in his chair of state, whispered courteous words to every lady as she passed him in the dance. The Monk of Montcalm, seated at a small trivet, furnished with a bason of holy water, with which he was to sprinkle the bridal-bed that night, was conning over his night-spells and benisons for the prosperity of the wedded pair : beside him stood the lord’s falconer, with

a hawk on his wrist, hooded to quell her screams; and the lady Isabelle's huntsman held a pair of snow-white hounds in a leash of gold tissue, broidered with names of the bride and bridegroom; and the all-licensed fool made jests on the allusion, and shook every bell on his cap in chorus to his own drollery, and joyous burthen was borne by the laugh of all the domestics, who that night were not reprov'd for their mirth by their lord. He was engaged with other thought, for ever as he glanced towards the Monk of Montcalm he muttered,—“Thou art the master of a powerless spell: they whom I rule have forespoken thee already.”

The bride had danced one round, and was seated in her chair of state, arrayed in cloth of silver, and a transparent veil falling over her lovely brow, as if to hide her from the gaze of the throng.—“It is she,” they said, “for whom Sir Paladour de la Croix Sanglante challenged and overthrew Simon de Montfort—him whom fifty lances had not shaken in his saddle-seat in the lists that day. It is she for whom he undertook and

accomplished the adventure against l'Aigle sur la Roche, who never released prisoner ransomless before."—"And right worthy," cried the knights, "was she of such valour."—"And as worthy," rejoined the ladies, "he of his reward." As they spoke, Sir Paladour, taking a torch from one of the attendants, offered his hand to the lady for another round. "I challenge this fair prisoner," said he, pressing the hand she gave, "by the golden fetters in which I bound it to-day;" and he glanced with gay triumph on the marriage ring.—"That were easy," said the smiling bride: "but oh, thou subtle enthraller! where didst thou learn to bind the heart in such fine fetters, that it cannot choose but quit its home to dwell with thee, and delight itself to dwell in such sweet prison ever?"—"There is no shrine on earth," said the impassioned bridegroom, "worthy of gem so rich. To look on thee, to listen to thee, to touch thy hand, are several such delights, that it were worth life's dearest peril to win but one of them; but to think all these, and thyself the

sum of all, are mine, wraps me in too exquisite a trance; and I fear," he added, darting on her eyes, under whose vivid and melting brilliancy her own sunk, "I fear I shall lose all consciousness of my felicity from its very excess."

At this moment a page approaching touched his mantle and whispered some words in his ear.—"Go, boy," he said slightly, "this is no hour for such importunacy;" and he led the lady as he spoke. The boy drew nearer and put a ring into his hand:—the glow that all that night had made his cheek seem like a living rose, left it in a moment as pale as that of the dead! He uttered some inarticulate sounds; and then, whispering his bride he would return on the instant, he hurried from the hall. As he crossed the threshold, he flung one unmarked look of agony in the direction where she stood, and disappeared. The lady, who had been employed in lifting and arranging her veil for the dance, heard his words, but saw not his expression; and re-seating herself to await his return, began to enter into gay talk with

her attendants. Suddenly she paused—"Do I see between sleep and waking?" she said, bending forward, "or is that my lord? Methinks he looks wondrous wan!"

Sir Paladour was seen leaning against the doorway, looking like any thing but a happy bridegroom. The gaiety of the festal was now on the decline; the cry through the hall was, "It waxes late—the torches burn to bedward." At the word the Lord of Courtenaye rose from his chair, and six pages arrayed in white detached themselves from the dance, and seized torches to escort the bridegroom. This movement, though it did not disturb the dancers, caused some tumult and press around the doorway, while all waited for the train of ladies who were first to escort the bride to her apartment. Sir Paladour stood like a statue amid the bridesmen, amongst whom some pleasantries suited to those coarse but merry times were passing, when Verac exclaimed, "Hold thy torch aloft, boy! By Heaven, Sir Paladour, thy cheek is as wan as that of

the dead!"—"And is no cheek here but mine pale?" said Paladour: "methinks thine 'is pale, too, Verac, and thine, Semonville." "The torches burn wondrous dim," said many voices: the pages trimmed them in vain. A blue pallid light diffused itself through the hall, and the flushed cheek of panting beauty paused from the dance, and the young ruddy aspects of the gazing pages were tinged with that pale and ghastly hue at the same moment; while, amid the vapour, the cressets and lamps waned in light like moons in their eclipse. The darkness increased, and the Lord of Courtenaye, however he might hail the signal, called aloud for fresh torches. The order was obeyed, but the torches they produced, lighted from those whose flame was so strangely coloured, had a tint of the same pale and portentous light.

At length the hall was cleared; the only individuals left were the Lord of Courtenaye and Thibaud: the former shewed some impatience of this officious surveillance of his vas-

sal—"Why art thou here?" he said.—"Because," said the vassal, "I see thine eye is fixed, and thy step pointed toward thy chamber of crime and darkness; when in such emergency didst thou say, 'why art thou here?'"—"I lack not thy counsel, nor thy aid," said his Lord: "begone, and trouble me not."—"Thus says a sorcerer to an imp who can no longer serve him," said Thibaud; "yet mark me, lord," and with cold hand and visage pale he approached the Lord of Courtenaye, and grasped his shrinking shoulder—"mark me, we met in mirth and wine to confer on thy brother's murder——let that pass. I meant not thou shouldst gnash and grin like a wolf at the memory.—Let us not part in sadness: we must drain cups to deep pledges ere we part," and he filled a vast cup to the brim.—"God rid me of thee, thou insolent knave!" said his lord.—"What sayest thou, Lord of Courtenaye," quoth Thibaud, reeling, but holding the cup straight, "deem'st thou I am carousing to the bridal?—No; I will name a health in which thou shalt pledge

me in thy soul——if thou hast one. Here is to the consummation of thy evil purposes!" and he attempted to drain the cup in vain. "Here is," he cried faintly, holding it to his lips, "here is to the fiend and thee!" Then after a deeper draught, "Here——here is to that daughter of Satan that weds the Lord of Courtenaye to-night in the vaults of his castle, and I shall be the bridesman in flames," he repeated, draining the cup, "flames in my throat—in my brain—in my heart. Am I not thy meet bridesman, Lord of Courtenaye?" and he fell prostrate on the floor, dashing in his fall the cup far from him.

"Insensate, intoxicated brute!" said the Lord of Courtenaye hasting from the hall, "and at such a time!" And as he raised the tapestry which led to the passage communicating with his secret closet, the prostrate wretch, raising his inflamed visage and blood-shot eyes, like the face of a demon, once more exclaimed, "flames——flames——in throat and brain; but not in soul like thee, false, fiendish lord!"

The Lord of Courtenaye stayed not to listen to his ravings : he hastened to his secret chamber, in the spirit of him who said " Evil, be thou my good." The terrible implements of the vault had all been removed thither ; there was the necromantic altar-block of stone supporting a seething cauldron, the triangular stone of black marble on whose dark and polished surface a light gleamed and disappeared successively as the flame of the cauldron blazed and sank---that flame was of the deepest blue ; there was no light in the chamber or closet, but that which issued from the cauldron.

The light thus singularly diffused fell on as singular a group. Three female forms, withered, haggard, and decrepid, were gathered round it. They were the same who had before been assembled in the vault. One of them kneeling, held open a parchment volume, on which characters were inscribed in red and black alternately. Right opposite, another hag was seated on her hams, her elbows resting on her knees, and her wither-

ed knuckles locked in her jaws, while her livid eyes and visage were now partially and ghastlily seen by the light of the cauldron, and then, as the gleam subsided, lost in darkness. The third, crouching close to the cauldron, flung in some ingredients, and zealously pursued her task of stirring the mixture. She was placed in such a position with regard to the light, that her figure was indefinable---her action only visible, as her dark arm crossed the flame from time to time.

“And thinkest thou,” said she who pored over the parchment leaves --- “thinkest thou she will fulfil her promise to-night? and that she will shew to him that which she hath promised?”---“Doubt it not,” said the other, without unlocking her contact of jaw and knuckle. “Did she not bring us first acquainted with the evil one? And if all be true, the Lord of Courtenaye is meeter mate for him than we.”---“It glads me,” said the inferior agent, who stirred the cauldron, “to see our mistress when she is wrought by

the passions of others, being passionless herself, to do or to promise that which passes earthly power. Then I feel she has a look that may command the fiend---I feel that my master may be my slave, if I had eye and voice and step like---Oh, she is awful in her moment of power!"---"Awful she is," said the other, "but awful though she be, she favours much one whom I remember fair in her youth. I was fair myself---men told me so; but age, and want, and the wish of revenge without the power, have brought me to what I am."---"But who was she?" said her hearers eagerly.---"Put in more nightshade and wolfsbane, and see that the flame wane not."---"Tell us whom doth our mistress resemble?"---"Even Marie de Mortemar," said the crone.---"And who was she?" said the reader of the parchment, dropping the scroll.---"She was a noble, beautiful lady, heiress of Mortemar; and methinks even yet our pale mistress hath her falcon eye, her glorious port, her thrilling voice; but it fared ill with her.---She was a

heretic ; and worse, she would be a preacher ---a prophetess---she would be the *Virgin* of the Albigenes. Her touch healed the sick---her prayer suspended the avalanche in its fall---her word raised the dead. She was one, as I have heard, who could make a heaven, herself being sole goddess ; or turn that heaven to hell. But lo, in the height of her spiritual pride, there came against her Count Raymond, then sworn brother to the Lord of Courtenaye, the brother of him whose hests we do, and the Bishop of Toulouse, and they despoiled her of lands and power, and burnt her castles, and made of her people serfs, and misused her in such sort, that she wandered a maniac for a time, and then was heard of no more.”--“ And fate too good for her,” said she who stirred the cauldron. “ Was she not a heretic ? I thank kind stars,” she muttered, pursuing her task---“ I thank kind stars, for holier name must not be uttered here, that witch as I am, I never was heretic, else may these flames I am stirring consume me.”

--“And how,” said the mocking hag who spoke last,---“how deemest thou thy lot better, being a witch?”---“Because,” said the other, in the dreaming darkness of her intoxicated existence, “I know not well whether I be witch or no. I am as one between the living world and that which lives not.--- Sometimes I think all a dream, and other time I think all reality, and often I know not what to think. I was promised wealth, and power, and youth, yet am I poor, and powerless, and withered. I banquet at gay feasts, and wake famished. I see stores of gold, and do the drudgery of a devil for a liard.”

“Hast thou had no hours of dark power and fearful pleasure, when we have drained the cup our mistress deals to us, and anointed us with that ointment she mixes?” said her companion, trying to fortify her own incredulity by the extorted confession of the other. “Have we not had brave nights, high visions, rare pleasures? Was it a dream that night when we danced round the tree, where hung the bodies of the vassals of the Lord of Courtenaye,

whom he slew in his mood for saying that he knew better how to feast the Crusaders, than to lead them; and ever as we danced we rent a rag or gnawed a muscle till they descended and joined us, the fetters clanking round the fleshless bones making meet time to our measure? Who our dark minstrel was, thou sawest thyself."

"And what was that," said the other in fiendish emulation---"what was that to the night we feasted in the ruined church interdicted for murder long since done, and in which the children of the Count of Toulouse sought sanctuary in vain? I, for thou wast not there, dug with these nails the body of a span-long unchristened brat from the grave where the mother, a leman of the Bishop of Toulouse, had smothered it in earth. Flags of the aisle were our table, and strange were the dainties heaped on them; but that which pleased our master best was the——Hush! let us stir the cauldron: the flame waxeth pale, and it must be the hue of the rose, ere the charm be perfect. Hark!" she exclaimed, "hark!" and "hark again!"

was repeated by her companions, as a sound of unutterable horror ascended from the floor on which they stood. "Is it our master?" said the hags, crouching close to each other. "Who are ye?" said a feeble voice,— "who are ye, the sound of whose voices I hear above me?" — "We are the daughters of evil!" said the elder hag, "met to do our father's will." — "And fitter spot ye might not choose," said the voice; "but if ye be human, list to me, though ye may not aid me." — "And who art thou that criest on us so?" said the hags, bending their ears to the floor. — "I am Vidal the minstrel!" said a feeble voice: "I have been plunged by the craft and crime of the Lord of Courtenaye in this dungeon, because my memory bore traces that are now effaced. Here have they held me in misery; but they fed me at least till within the last two days. From thence I have not tasted food, and that I should lightly regard; all I crave is one draught of water! water! and I die content." The hags, from the deepest experience of human wretchedness combined with the most craving excitement of the

imagination, were as unmoved by the horrors they heard as by those they were about to prepare, and they would have mocked the gasping petitioner, had not one appeared among them, who in a moment chained up every tongue in terror.

It was the Lord of Courtenaye, who entering the closet locked the door behind him, and then fiercely turning to the group demanded—"Where is *she*?"—"She will be here anon," answered the beldames; "and meanwhile we lack no implements for our task."—"To it, then, and suddenly, and successfully," said the Lord of Courtenaye: "or ye shall welter and roar in the cauldron ye are lighting! To your gear and quickly, ye hags. So sure as I fling down this key from my hand," and he dropped it into the seething cauldron, "so surely shall ye never quit your task till it be fulfilled."—"She will be here anon—doubt it not," said the terrified hags.—"I neither doubt nor believe, nor think nor feel," said the furious lord: "on with your task! The night wanes, and the fiery arrow is already drawn to the head—the

heavens are dark—the astrologer reads the stars no more. What light I may now catch must flash on me from the abysses of that downward world, of whose entrance ye are meet portresses.” Two of the wretched women then linked themselves hand in hand, while the third recited aloud from her parchment. As they hopped and hobbled their witch-dance round the cauldron, one of them repeated incessantly, *hurr, hurr, hurr, harr, hus, hus*; at every sound striking her staff stronger on the floor, while her voice rose to a shriek, and the other uttered the imagined potent sounds *Dies, dies jesquet benedofet, douvima, enitemaus*. The arch-witch meanwhile stirred the cauldron, and read fast and loud from that bloody scroll.* Suddenly the blaze of the cauldron tapered upward, gleamed and expired. “By hell!” said the Lord of Courtenaye, “ye mock me with some device.” The hags wearily pursued their magic dance, and the cauldron blazed

* Vide Delrio, Wierus, Glanville, or Ben Jonson’s very poetical mask of Queens.

again. "Of what hue must the flame be," said the Lord of Courtenaye, "ere her promise be fulfilled?"—"The hue of the blood-red wine, or of the warrior's heart-drops," answered the witches.---"And know ye not, hags, a spell to make the flame change its hue from that pale infernal blue to crimson? Hark ye! raise the flame to its right and ruddy hue, or by hell I will stir the cauldron with your withered carcases!"

The terrified hags renewed their "toil and trouble:" and the fierce and fiend-like visage of the Lord of Courtenaye was bent more eagerly on the blaze. The hags crouched breathless beside it. "I have got an ingredient of power," said one of them; "but our mistress charged me not to use it, save in her presence."---"Use it now," said the Lord of Courtenaye, "plunge it in, or thou thyself shalt plunge in that cauldron!" Thus urged, the wretched woman flung the ingredient with which the mistress of the spell had furnished her into the cauldron. It was a chemical preparation of singular power. The moment it was dropped into

the cauldron, the flame sank and all was darkness for a moment. The next it blazed up to the height of the ceiling, caught fierce and instant hold of the rafters, and next of the cloth with which the apartment was hung. And in a few moments every compartment of the chamber was on flame, and the light of the cauldron extinguished in that of blazing roof, tapestry, and furniture.

The first effort of the Lord of Courtenaye was to recover the key which in his passion he had flung into the cauldron. But its contents were boiling like molten lead, and with a shriek of agony he withdrew his arm. His next was to call on his wretched associates to assist in extinguishing the flames; but all the materials were combustible, and their thread-bare rags, which they tore off to stifle the flames, burned like tinder in a moment. His last impulse was to rush to the door, and thunder at it with hand and foot, uttering all the time yells of fierce and fearful agony. The chamber was remote from the haunt of domestics. He redou-

bled his cries : but, meanwhile, the flames had increased, the tapestry was consumed, the roof was in a flame over their heads, and blazing fragments began to drop on the floor. The cloth that hung before the warrior's portrait, consumed to ashes, crumbled away, and the figure painted on copper, and resisting the force of the flames, stood out strongly in the horrid light, as if a living and present being glared on the fearful doom of his foe.

At this moment, the wretched hags, maddened by the increasing flames, yet retaining some witch-like associations, excited by the crimson blaze, began once more their ghastly reel about the cauldron, whose over-boiling flames caught their garments in a moment. They blazed, yet still they staggered in that wild dance, and shrieked their spells as the fire reached their flesh. Then all at once they seized hold of the Lord of Courtenaye. Loud as his cries were, they were drowned by louder cries without. A hundred voices shouted—"Where is the Lord of

Courtenaye ?---Where?" and a hundred footsteps were heard above in the stone-paved galleries.----" Here---here !" said their lord, whose horror of his dreadful death overcame his fear of being discovered with such associates in such employment. " I burn---I burn ; ---unless aid be given presently. The key is lost---use axe and crow---break ope the door ---break ope the door !" he cried, turning his feeble fingers round the massive lock.

" Then mischief hath done its masterpiece, and it is hell's very holiday !" exclaimed a voice without. " The Lady Isabelle lies slaughtered in the bridal bed, and none can trace the assassin !"---" What tellest thou me of the Lady Isabelle !" said the Lord of Courtenaye : " I tell thee, slave, I burn !" The volumes of smoke now came bursting from beneath the door, and through the apertures of the walls. In a moment crows and axes, and all the implements for forcing a way, were thundering against the door ; while another party ascending by a stair, the landing-place of which was on the roof of that closet, tore

it up, with pick-axe and all implements at hand; and others toiled to drag up the stair vessels of water to pour on the flame. The din was horrible: the dying screams of the hags, two of whom were suffocated by the flames, the last dancing and blazing in a paroxysm of fury-like inebriation, till she fell---the cries of the Lord of Courtenaye, who held fast hold of the door, shrieking at every blow dealt on it---the clash and batter on the roof of the chamber---the roar of the suppressed flames---the clamour of the attendants, made the scene almost infernal. It was in vain the strength of the vassals was tried on the iron-plated door: blow after blow was dealt in vain. Above, the toil was more successful: the planks were rent asunder, the rafters laid bare, casks of water poured on the flames; and bending through the fractures of the ceiling, they heard their lord exclaim, "Oh, for one drop of the water that I have denied the thirsty mendicant at my castle-gate!----one drop!"----"One drop," echoed a voice which none heard but

he. The same exclamation was uttered, and at the same moment, by the lord of the castle and the victim of the dungeon. At that moment the floor gave way, and went crashing and blazing into the vault below. "Fling down ropes, since the door will not yield," cried a hundred voices, as the shrieking lord clung to the posts of the door, the scorching fragments of the floor being his only standing-place. "Come heaven or hell," said Thibaud, whom frantic intoxication bent over the shattered roof among the rest, "the Lord of Courtenaye shall not perish alone: be his doom what it will, I will partake it." And, spite of the resistance, he dashed himself from the crater, as it might be termed, into the gulph below. The impulse of his fall shattered and bore down the single plank on which the Lord of Courtenaye stood. They plunged together amid smoke and flame; but amid both arose another form, whose yell and grasp, hideousness and fierceness, justified the terrible construction put on its appearance. "Out with thy

beads, Monk of Montcalm," cried all: "save ---save him, if thou canst! The fiend hath risen in flames to seize him!--how he grapples!--how he writhes!--how he gnashes!----the fiend is stronger! Holy Mary!----Did ever human eyes see such sight!--The fiend hath him---he plunges him into the flames.---Tell thy beads faster, monk. Holy monk, save his soul, if not his body!--He rises---he shrieks---he sinks---he is lost!" all exclaimed, as the Lord of Courtenaye disappeared, sinking into that vault of flame and darkness with the ghastly shape that seized him. It was indeed Vidal, the prisoner of the dungeon, who, in the agonies of his dying vengeance, as the roof of his prison fell in, had seized on his tyrant lord, and dragged him down into the flames, amid which he was himself choking and expiring.

The smouldering ruins of the magic chamber fell fast into that gulph of flame. All present averted their eyes at the sight, and prayed in terror or in deprecation. A single voice thundered through that awful si-

lence : it exclaimed, “ When have my predictions failed ? Said I not unto thee, *thou shouldest meet my Master and thine this night ?*” Those who heard had scarce time to catch the sound, or distinguish the form of the speaker ; for many footsteps approached, and voices were heard to exclaim---“ Foul witchery hath been wrought this night ! The body of the lady Isabelle hath disappeared ; the traces of blood are in the chamber, but nowhere can her corse be found. Close all the doors, let every knight in the castle draw his brand, and look that the murderer escape not.”

CHAPTER II.

But their way
Lies through the perplex'd paths of this drear wood.
MILTON'S *Comus*.

THE Monk of Montcalm had set out on his return to Beaucaire, after doing his errand at the convent of the Paraclete. The danger to be apprehended from the wolves, which infested the forest that lay in his nearest way, induced him to adopt another and more circuitous route. While pursuing it, evening came on---a grey and misty twilight veiled every object. The way lay through a rocky road that wound among mountains, or rather stony hills, bleak and bare. Not a sound broke on the stillness, save the echo of the solitary passenger's steps from the hollows of the hill, and the screams of the birds,

which, after a few short circles in the grey and cloudy air, flew back to their retreat among the cliffs.

As the evening or rather night advanced, the clouds dispersed, and the scene around became less dreary. The path opened on a plain apparently boundless; it was covered with a soft thick sward, of which the elastic resistance to the tread made the footing delightful: the wide dome of the horizon was its only limit; the bright stars "came up above the head" of the traveller, and there was just that dubious interval between light and darkness, that, though shadowy and indistinct, cannot be termed gloomy. So profound was the silence, too, that the monk could distinctly hear his own footsteps; there was no other sound, save the whistle of the shepherds shooting across the heath, or a few notes of those simple airs by which they amused the loneliness of their pastoral life, and which, heard thus at night, (the singer too invisible,) had an expression of plaintive and soothing sweetness which they must have wanted by

day : they had the effect not only of cheering the path, but the spirits, of the good monk. "Perchance," he said, "those sounds, so simple and yet sweet, may be caught by a more skilful ear than mine ; and, when adorned with courtly words, and set off by some curious instrument, may yet be heard with delight in the palaces of princes.* And thus too, perhaps," he added, "the sounds that these poor Albigeois have presumed to strike on the mysterious chords of inspiration, when modulated by a truer ear and a finer touch, may be caught by futurity, and one day make music in the ear of heaven." The plain now terminated in one of those thickets through which he had to make his way, to avoid the dangers of the forest. Here, struggling through the tangled and intricate brakes, the only point of direc-

* This idea was suggested to the writer on hearing the beautiful Irish air of Aileen Aroon, composed probably by some poor illiterate minstrel, (though tradition says otherwise,) sung in a crowded theatre by Madame Catalani.

tion discoverable was a small eminence, surmounted by what, on reaching it, he discovered to be a cross of stone. He gained it, and tried to send his feeble sight far into the night. The lights that long ere this should have glimmered from the town of Beaucaire, were not visible; the humble spires of Paraclete had ceased to be so long ere twilight; and where the sky glowed with the blaze of its brightest constellations, their lights burned in the direction of the far-distant towers of Courtenaye, so late the seat of beauty, valour, and festivity; now dark, deserted, and suggesting only images of fearful and mysterious calamity.

At this moment he saw a light at a small distance, slowly but distinctly approaching him. It paused, and then he thought he could distinguish a group of figures; but all was dim, shadowy, and uncertain. The Monk of Montcalm, however, sure that human beings were near, hasted from the eminence to implore their assistance; but, at the first sound of his voice, the light

was extinguished and the figures became totally invisible. He struggled on—he thought he heard the low moanings of one in pain, but suppressing his cries; and, as he attempted to feel his way with extended hands, something like a human hand touched his; but the touch was so cold, that the monk withdrew his from the contact, shuddering as he did so with invincible horror. The encounter seemed, however, to brace his nerves; for, after having, with dizzy head and unconscious step, forced his way, as he imagined, but a few paces onward, he found himself on a spot which must have been a furlong from his last position. Here the brushwood was cleared away—a few dwarf trees only intercepted the view: but these stood lone and almost ghastly, waving their boughs in the night-breeze like the arms of skeletons; their pale bark and doddered trunks making themselves visible in the dim light.

Amid this scene, cheerless, if not desolate, on a bare platform, stood a tower, large, square, and low. Around this lonely tower were the

fragments of a shattered wall, amid whose angles (for it was very irregularly built) were the remains of some ruinous outbuildings. The monk paused and looked round him : terror was his first impulse ; but his weariness, both mental and bodily, prevailed, and he was compelled to seat himself on a fragment of the ruined wall, while he trembled at the shelter he sought. It was the tower of Hugo, or Hugues,* in whose vicinity the boldest in that country dreaded to be after sunset. The monk was not without his share of the superstition of the age ; but the purity of his conscience was a balance to the errors of his creed ; and he looked on the tower, and thought of its terrible inhabitant, with fear indeed, but unmixed with a sense of danger.

As he looked upwards on the huge

* Ugo, or Hugues, was a baron of Languedoc, who favoured the Albigeois, and from whom the French protestants of a later period derived the name of Huguenots. The superstition of the age represented him as a necromancer, who, after death, continued to haunt the castle and its neighbourhood with a band of infernal associates.

pile, dimly defined on the troubled sky, a small postern that lay concealed in the darkness was cautiously opened, and two figures issuing from it, approached him. They spoke, but their conversation was in whispers, and he could distinguish only one sentence: "It is done! and were the guerdon doubled, I would not undertake such task again." They passed on; and dreary as the speech had been, the monk felt it was still drearier to listen to their departing tread, and watch their figures as they diminished in the darkness.

At this moment a light was distinctly seen gleaming in a loop-hole of the tower; and though this was, in the monk's opinion, a very equivocal sign that the inmates of the tower were beings of his own species, he continued to watch with that vague hope that light always suggests in a situation so lonely, till he saw it glimmer through a narrow slit that seemed on a level with the postern. If the hand that bears that light be human, thought the monk, rising with difficulty, it will not close the

door against me at such an hour. And he struck on it with his staff.—In a few moments it was opened slowly, and a figure appeared at it, bearing a light in its hand. It was tall, and enveloped so completely in dark garments, that neither form, sex, nor age was distinguishable. The eyes alone were visible; and though they were bright and large, there was an expression in them that was not calculated to diminish the feeling its singular appearance created. The monk (in a tone that he could not prevent from faltering) told his distress as a benighted traveller, and entreated permission to enter, almost wishing now it might be denied. The figure appeared to be examining him closely: at length it replied, “Enter, if thou wilt.” But these words, pronounced in a voice by which it was still impossible to judge of the speaker’s sex, seemed, by the manner in which they were uttered, to imply “Enter if you dare.” The monk, anxious for something like a parley with his strange host, asked if he might be permitted to sleep that night

beneath the roof. "Sleep," answered the figure in the same tone, "if thou canst." It closed the door as the monk entered, and, turning, led the way up a winding staircase of stone, rudely constructed, and much dilapidated. After ascending a few steps, it led the way through an arch of stone, without a door, into a large chamber; into the centre of which it advanced, and then stood in silence.

The monk looked round him. The apartment was rude, wild, and desolate; without furniture, and apparently without other inhabitant. The walls were of unhewn stone, and, with the arched ceiling, were blackened by time and smoke. In the huge fire-place some embers were still burning on the hearth, shedding on the wide arch above and the rugged walls

—— "A melancholy light,
'The gloom of glowing embers.'"

On one side was a kind of rude wooden couch, on which were spread some dark vestments; on the other side a heap of the same

* Lee's *Œdipus*.

seemed huddled in a dark nook ; on the hearth was placed a large cauldron. These objects were scarce discoverable by the dim light the figure held, but were disclosed from time to time by the red and fitful glow of the fire. The monk had time to notice these objects, for the figure had not yet spoken, but remained standing in the centre of the room. At length, pressing its hand on its brow, as if with an effort at recollection, it muttered, " Yes, he lacks food." Then turning to the monk—" Thou art with one who, unconscious of human wants, sometimes forgets that the children of the dust possess not such exemption." And, pointing to the monk to sit down on a bench of stone, it offered him some fragments of bread and a cup of water.—The monk declined the food, but drank the water, first fortifying himself with an internal ejaculatory prayer. " Perhaps thou art dainty : I have nought else to offer."—" It is my wonted—in truth, mine only fare," replied the monk ; " but I am weary and o'erworn, and would willingly sleep." The figure silently pointed

to a nook in which some straw was spread, and then quitted the apartment, bearing the light with it ; while the monk, after praying with more than usual fervency, tried to betake himself to rest. The glare of the fire for a long time prevented him from closing his eyes ; and when at length he did so, and was sinking into rest, he was roused by a groan, not loud, but perfectly audible, issuing evidently from some one in the chamber. He half rose on his elbow, and looked round him : it was not repeated, and he tried to compose himself again. But he had scarcely done so, when a second groan was heard nearer him, as if the person who uttered it was approaching.

Giving up all farther thoughts of rest, the monk now began telling his beads earnestly. But, while thus occupied, his eyes involuntarily closed from weariness ; and he then thought he perceived the light, that had hitherto shone so strongly through the chamber, suddenly obscured, so as to be perceptible to his sight, though his eyes were closed. Once more he raised himself, and then saw

distinctly a dark figure standing between him and the fire. Its back was turned to him ; but the form was visible, and strongly defined on the light. After a few moments, it glided away, and was lost in the obscurity of the chamber.

The monk now arose, and tremblingly but solemnly adjured the vision, whether a living mortal or a disembodied spirit, to appear and reveal the cause of its restlessness and its wailings. There was no answer, but, as he advanced farther into the apartment, it appeared to him that the heap of vestments spread on the couch, which he had before observed, moved slightly. “ This light deceives mine eyes, perchance,” he said ; “ yet surely those garments seem so disposed as if a human body lay beneath them.” The folds heaved palpably as he spoke. With the preternatural courage of fear, he raised part of the drapery, and saw with horror, beneath, the naked bosom of a man, from a wound in whose side the blood was still flowing. He had not strength to look at the face ; he staggered some paces back, and

leaned against the wall for support. At this moment the sound of steps slowly roused him, and the figure he had before beheld again entered the chamber, bearing something in its arms.

The monk did not venture to quit the spot: he stood contracting his figure and suppressing his breath, while he watched its movements. After some uncertain gestures and vague glances round the chamber, it crouched at length before the fire, and, unfolding the burthen it held in its arms, began to drop slowly and singly its contents into the cauldron. These appeared to be herbs; but there were other ingredients: and at length he perceived relics of mortality, bones and parts of a human body, mingling in the mixture. He could no longer doubt the purpose and employment of the figure; and, trembling lest he should become in some degree a partaker of the crime by continuing to witness it, he hastened from his concealment, and called aloud on the figure to forbear. She rose, and turning hastily towards him, dropped the mantle which enfolded her head,

and disclosed the features of a face which, but once beheld, had been forgotten never.---

“ He had awaken'd at night

With the dream of those ghastly eyes.”*

His first impulse was to gaze on them for a moment with unmingled horror; his next, to fly from the place. “ Stay me not,” he cried, as she appeared attempting to detain him: “ withhold me not; I know thee who thou art! Not a word, not a breath, will I exchange with thee: I know thee who thou art!”---“ Know me!” she replied in a voice in which scorn seemed to be mingled with incredulity.---“ I know all!” he exclaimed; “ I know thee, thy crime, and thy despair: crime that forbids mercy; despair that shuts out hope.”---“ Thy words---thy voice,” she said, “ are like those dreams that sometimes cross the dark sleep of my existence. Now the recollection rises dimly on me like a vision. Dost thou remember the lonely lake, and her who rowed the dark skiff? It was

* Southey's *Thalaba*.

a strange meeting that—marked by doubtful question and fearful answer.” “Would I did not remember!” replied the monk, crossing himself. And he recalled that night alluded to in the commencement of our tale, when he had encountered this female, previously to her meeting with Sir Paladour, and after having done deep penance for the involuntary crime of listening to her dreadful secret. “Yet stay,” she said, detaining him, while she seemed searching her scattered recollections, “yet stay, there is a task to be done, in which thou wilt not scorn to join even with me: there is one whose wound is deep and deadly, and thou must aid me to heal it.”---“Wretched woman,” cried the monk, who believed she spoke of herself, “for such wound as thine there is no balm, no leech, or healing in mortal power.”---“And deemest thou it was of a spirit’s immortal wounds I spoke?” she said, “or sought aid or cure for them from *thee*? Then were my folly beyond even my crime. No---it was of another I spake, and, light as I hold thine

aid, or that of man, the credulity (which thou wouldst call faith) of the sufferer demands the charm of prayer muttered over the ingredients I am preparing for his cure : it may not else be wrought.”---“ And darest thou,” said the monk, shrinking with horror from the proposal, “ darest thou imagine that I would blend the worship of Heaven with the rites of Hell, and mix the breath of profaned and polluted prayer with the steam that issues from that cauldron of abomination ? If I pray for thy victim, I pray alone.”---“ My victim !” cried the female with fierce derision. “ Ye are the victims of your own lusts, madness, and crime---victims of your own preparation. And then ye dare to accuse the stars---the elements---the hurtless operation of inanimate things. Yea, in your insane impotence, ye accuse that Heaven that renounces and hates ye ! My victim !” she repeated ; “ when was man a victim, but by his own agency ?”---“ I heed not thy ravings,” replied the monk, divested of all terror : “ if good is to be wrought,

tell me how, or on whom ; but it never can be in conjunction with thee !”

A deep groan seemed to echo his words ; and now fully aroused and emboldened, the monk turned to observe whence it issued. That smaller heap of coiled-up garments which he had noticed before, seemed to stir, and a sound was heard from beneath it that resembled respiration painfully suppressed. He made a movement to approach it. “ Hold !” cried the female, seizing his arm, “ disturb not the slumberer : Sleep is the image of death. When have mortals rest but in sleep, or in the grave ?”---“ Talk not to me,” said the monk,---“ here hath been evil done---a corse lies in this chamber. I tell thee, wretched woman---if woman thou art---weak as I am, I will not quit this spot till I know what body lies beneath that bloody and unblest covering.”---“ It is a wounded knight,” she said ; “ and I have brought him hither that I may heal him.”---“ And is it with such ingredients the cure is to be wrought ! What are the foul

contents of yonder cauldron?"—"Thou knowest not what is mingling in that potent inixture," she replied, bending her eye on it. "There be hope and anguish, crime and fear; tears wept from the heart, and mingled with its blood; maidens' young vows, and true men's broken hearts."—"Aroint thee, foul witch!" cried the monk, "*adjuro te in nomine !*"—"Peace with thy powerless jargon," she interrupted; "the adder's ear is not deafer to it than mine. Speak! wilt thou utter a prayer over what I have prepared and provided here? For myself I ask thee none: those who have nothing to hope, have also nothing to fear."—"Blaspheme not, wretched woman! Holy Heaven, is it possible that aught that once bore thine image can be so utterly fallen!"—"Fallen!" she repeated in an altered tone; "yes, truly thou sayest fallen;—it is not that time has bowed my form, that disease has ravaged my frame, that anguish has withered my heart: this is not to be fallen;—it is when God hath departed from the soul where he dwelt; when the

cherubim withdraw their plumes from the mercy-seat ; when the desecrated temple becomes the den of fiends, the abode of hatred and vengeance ! *That, that* is to be fallen, and that am I !”

Moved by her words, the monk was attempting to frame his voice into a tone of compassion ; when, the tide of her feelings suddenly recoiling, she burst into a strain of imprecation so vehement, continuous, and dreadful, that the holy man, believing himself in truth in the presence of an evil spirit, and losing all other fears in the thought, rushed from the spot in horror : nor was it till he was at some distance from the tower that he could collect his thoughts, and endeavour, by urgent prayer, to banish the recollection of the horrible sounds with which his ears still seemed ringing.

CHAPTER III.

When, lo ! a train profusely gay
Comes pranking o'er the place.

PARNELL.

THE beams of the morning sun rising in a cloudless sky, and gleaming on the glittering frost-work of a wintry but smiling landscape ; the crisped earth ; the narrowed brook, with its line of blue waters gliding between two banks of crystal ; the cold but reviving and bracing air ; the twittering of the birds, waking in their wintry nests amid the leafless branches ; and the merry bells ringing in the town of Beaucaire, whose spires towered and sparkled in the far blue horizon—came welcomingly and refreshingly to the senses of the poor monk, as the morning broke on his advancing progress. The fearful night had passed, and he felt

its dark images disappear before the cheering and invigorating influence of that kindest if not loveliest of mornings---the bright healthful morning of a genial winter-day.

He wound his way through the thicket, and after one involuntary reverted glance towards the dark tower of Ugo, was entering on the plain, when, from an opposite hill, a gay and splendid train appeared descending, and the contrast between them and the fearful forms of the past night, made them appear like some bright group from fairy-land.

A gallant array of knights and men-at-arms, well accoutred and mounted, rode round a lady, sumptuously attired, and appearing the mistress of the train : the bells round the necks of the knights' horses, and the bugles of their attendants, making a merry melody as they rode. Behind them followed a smaller train ; and as they reached the foot of the hill the van halted, and the knights, reining up their steeds on each side, left a space in the centre, where the lady sat on her palfrey alone. The party in the rear then advanced,

and a young female, alighting from her horse, knelt to the lady, and attempted to kiss her hand, while the other, bending from her saddle, embraced her. A short delay occurred, as a brief and hurried farewell seemed to pass between the two parties. The former gathering round the lady in the splendid garb, and pushing their horses to speed as they parted in one direction; while a single knight, with about a dozen men-at-arms, appeared to act as the guide and conductor of the other female, who had now remounted her horse, and rode rapidly in the opposite direction. The parties seemed to separate with every token of regard, the knights saluting by lowering their bannered lances and bending their plumed heads, and the females by waving the ends of their embroidered veils, and kissing their hands till they could behold each other no longer.

The former party consisted of queen Ingelberg, who, with De Vaugelas and Limosin, was pursuing her way to Paris; the latter,

of Sir Amirald and his train, who by the queen's order, and at her own wish, was conducting Genevieve to Toulouse.

On that spot they had parted ; but not before a change, at which she trembled, had taken place in Genevieve's heart and mind. She had rode some days in peace and security with queen Ingelberg's party. Caressed by the grateful queen, honoured by her courtly attendants, and, most dangerous of all, loved by one, for whose love she would have forsaken all but her faith : in this short interval of tranquillity, the only one her stormy existence had ever known, characters had been developed without the strong exigency of circumstances, and feelings expressed, that seemed the birth of the heart and the habit, not of the moment.---What noble feeling !----what lofty thought !----what deep self-devotedness !----what graceful courtesy had not the knights displayed ; and queen Ingelberg, who owed her superiority evidently more to her rank than to her intellectual emi-

nence, how grateful was she ! and how resistless

In all the graceful gratitude of power !*

And their manner---their voices---their language---their whole existence, seemed modulated on a scale of noble harmony. All that was lofty---all that was refined in life, seemed to be concentrated in the self-devoted valour of the men---the stately and gentle courtesy of the women. And these were the beings who had been represented to her from infancy as demons of pride, rapacity, and brutality ; and Amirald, too, the beautiful, the brave, the gentle, was he indeed the enemy of Heaven?---She began to doubt her creed ; then trembling at her own aberrations, forced herself to cast a look on her future life---it was one of poverty and toil ; for she had sacredly determined to appropriate the value of the jewels she had received from the queen to the relief of her suffering people, and to maintain herself by

* Lalla Rookh.

her own labours ; and her late existence, caressed by royalty and flattered by love, was to be a dream---And let it be a dream ! she sighed, with a strong effort of internal resolution : she struggled hard with her heart, and strove to fix her eye steadily on her future prospects, dreary as they were.

“ Would I had never known them,” she said ; meaning only *him* when she said *them* ; for the creed, the home, and the habits of her fathers seemed dark to her mental eye as she forced it to dwell on them : and she tried to expiate the involuntary crime by an internal resolve never to suffer gratitude, admiration, or another feeling (which she would not name but could not disavow) to interfere with the claims of her conscience ;---the duties, the exigencies, the necessities, (and she often repeated the word) the necessities of her own destination. Perhaps she was not aware that this resolution was made while her face was averted from that of Sir Amiral, for the next moment when she beheld those features glowing with youth, beauty,

and passion, she again felt her heart palpitate and her mind wander. She could not, however, decline conversing with her guide and protector, though she knew that the topic of his discourse would put her resolution to the test ; and she prepared to listen with averted face and a rigid determination of self-watchfulness and self-possession.

The conversation was long, earnest, and animated on the part of Amirald : its tenor may be conjectured from the only reply of Genevieve's that was audible,---“ No, Sir Knight, never!--Sir Knight, never---the destiny of a noble youth must not be thwarted and debased by a lot so lowly and hapless.---Go on, noble knight, in the career to which thy fate calls thee, and honour and fortune sit on thy lance, save when it is levelled against the helpless and the harmless ! Forget me, save when thou meetest one of my people ; and then think on me and spare him. Some fair and noble maiden---” but she could not finish this part of the picture ; and so, having uttered her resolution with what

strength she might, she said to herself, "Now my heart is at peace---yes, I *am* at peace;" and dropping her veil, wept in silent agony within its folds.

But here she was mistaken : endless opportunities occurred during their journey, and Amiral was not a youth likely to lose his suit for lack of importunity ; besides, pleading has a thousand tones, and refusal but one ; and Genevieve grew wearied and ashamed of the poverty and monotony of her sole reply to the endlessly varied and increasingly eloquent pleadings of her lover : nature, too, seemed to take part against her in their progress ; for the spot where they halted to partake of their noon-day meal, seemed formed to soften the heart : it was one of those spots that winter seems delighted to spare---a grassy path kept fresh and verdurous by overhanging evergreens, terminated in a rocky inclosure, whose acclivities were feathered to their very summits with every tree and shrub that could yet boast a leafy spray or a tint of green. A narrow stream fell in sheets of foam from the highest

rocks, and rested in a basin, where its transparent dark-brown water gave back, as it reposed, the image of every rock and grassy tuft and pendent spray that overhung it: around, the rocks were hollowed into cavities, rich with mosses of every hue, and the fantastic clusters of creeping plants:---their rude forms, sequestered look, and the mystical and shifting light that played over them, as the sun gleamed on the water or the wind waved the boughs, suggesting the image---

*Intus aquæ dulces, vivoque sedilia saxo,
Nympharum domus.**

It was here the travellers rested, and seating themselves on the grass, partook of their repast, and slaked their thirst at the stream as it fell. "Thou art resolved, then, that I must be of noble birth," said Amirald, renewing the topic of their conversation as soon as he could: "Alas! sweet Genevieve, I am the child of mystery---a foundling, exposed beneath the walls of the castle of Courtenaye, and reared on the surly charity of its

* Virgil.

lord. I never knew but one whose destiny, he told me, bore aught of similitude to mine ---that darkly-fated knight de la Croix Sanglante."

Genevieve trembled at the name. "Alas!" cried Amirald, his eyes fast filling with tears at the recollection; "alas! for the noble knight!---the love of brothers was but a faint image of mine for thee, Paladour. A braver knight never laid lance in rest; a truer never pledged faith to a brother-in-arms; a goodlier never wooed lady in her bower. Woe is me for thee, Paladour! But what a fearful cloud overshadowed thy setting!"---"Fearful indeed," Genevieve murmured, shuddering as she remembered the night of the apparition in the convent of the Paraclete.

"Methinks," said Amirald, half reclining on his cloak, which he had spread on the grass, and letting his blue eye fall negligently on the lovely scene around him,---"methinks, when I recall the disastrous fate of the brave and lovely, when I think of Paladour and the lady Isabelle, the world and all it con-

tains grow dim to my view. I wonder not that men have fled from it to these sweet and solitary places. Methinks I could now cut off mine hair;" and he displayed, not unconsciously, its glossy and redundant clusters; "change my lance for a staff, my chain for a rosary, mine helmet for a cowl, and dwell in yonder cave, a hooded eremite.---No, not an eremite---I would be a peasant---a wool-clad peasant; and thou, sweet Genevieve, by my side, while heart and hovel alike were brightened by the light of thy smile."

Genevieve struggled hard to wrest her mind from the contemplation of the picture; but it would not do: her natural love for rural scenery and rural habits took part with her heart; and she thought she was but advocating her own simple tastes, while she was unconsciously pleading the cause of a different and a more dangerous client. She spoke of the spot with an enthusiasm she had never felt before, and there was not an object around, from the blue mountains in the distance, to the redbreast that alit with its slender feet on

the turf to pick the crumbs of their meal, that she did not try to paint to his attention, with all her simple skill, till she discovered that the eyes of Amirald were fixed not on her, but on a superb eagle that was soaring right above their heads and appeared stationary at the proud height he had towered to. "That is a gallant bird," he exclaimed, screening his dazzled eyes with his hand; "oh, who would hop and peck, a red-breast in the shade, when he might soar an eagle among the clouds? My heart would burst were I to live amid all this softness, sloth, and obscurity. Babieca, my gallant steed," he cried to his war-horse, which he had named after the Cid's, and which came forwards snorting and bounding at the sound of his voice,—“Babieca, wouldst thou not renounce my recreant weight for dooming thee but in thought to the drudgery of a vile peasant's market-horse?”

The blood rushed to Genevieve's cheek; it overspread even brow and bosom. "So wouldst thou deem *thyself* dishonoured, Sir

Knight," she cried, "wert thou yoked with such humble mate as me; for ever wouldst thou blush for the shame, for ever reproach her who was its cause, and its victim."

"I should only have to reproach myself," said Amirald, whose feelings flowed in rapid and contending tides, "for having risked all for one, who had not even a heart to offer in return."

Genevieve, without speaking, fixed her eyes on him, till feeling them suffused with tears, she withdrew them. "Is this generous? is it noble?" she said at last with a faltering voice — "is it even kind, Sir Knight?" she added in one still more subdued, "to crush out from a heart by torture the secret it *ought* to keep—if it could?" — "And canst thou love, sweet Genevieve?" said the youth, half-reclining towards her, while his pleading tones and glowing eyes made that moment more dangerous than a thousand hours of reproaches.—"Is it manly, Sir Knight, to pursue such poor triumph farther?" said the weeping maiden.—"Nay,

weep not, sweet Genevieve ; in sooth I spoke but in jest ; I love these scenes, I love all that is soft, soothing, and lonely : I love these leaves," he cried catching at some from a pendent branch, "for they remind me of the couch which the gentle heretic once spread for the wounded knight. *But*," he added, and then glancing at his accoutrements, some of which lay glittering on the turf where he reclined, and pointing to his war-steed, "*But*"——"I feel, Sir Knight, what thou wouldst say," she uttered : "here let our conference end ; and yet remember, noble, and knight as thou art, that *He* who made man for happiness, and was the best judge of his own work, placed him at his creation not in palace, castle or city—He placed him in a garden, and called it Paradise."——"And Paradise would be this spot," cried the enamoured Amirald, "if—Hark ! what sound was that ? was it the scream of the eagle ?—no, by Heaven, the breath of the trumpet ! and lo where an armed band bears up the hill ! Ha ! the lilies of France glitter in the van. To horse, fellows ! my helmet,

my gorget, help to don them quickly: it must doubtless be some noble company: fear not, maiden, I will be with thee soon."

And Sir Amirald rode away at full speed with some of the men-at-arms. Genevieve followed him with her eyes, and saw on the summit of a hill a band of knights and men-at-arms, who, with bugles sounded and banners displayed, proudly crested the eminence where they stood, seeming the precursors of a more numerous host that was following. A stately form in complete armour appeared the leader of the train; a person in the habit of a monk stood by his side, and Sir Amirald soon rode by the other. Cordial and courtly greeting passed; a brief but earnest conference then took place between the three; at the termination of which, Sir Amirald rode off with speed in another direction, attended by a few followers of the stranger band.

Genevieve continued to gaze in the direction he pursued long after he disappeared, and then with an indefinable feeling of de-

jection and anxiety turned to look on her few remaining companions. Reading neither intelligence or comfort in their looks, and not suffering herself to doubt of Amirald's swift return, she remounted her horse, and dropping her veil sat in anxious silence. She was not long left in suspense; a man in the habit of a pursuivant, approached from the stranger party, and after exchanging a few words in a tone of authority with her companions, approached her with an air in which licentious freedom was blended with mock courtesy. "Fair damsel," said he, "it is the command of the princely leader of yonder band, that I conduct you to him, and that you share the protection of his company." Genevieve, mute from consternation, made no reply; the man then attempted to raise her veil, but she held it closely; he then caught her rein and led her a few steps onward. "Sir stranger," she said checking her horse, "whatever claims your leader may have on your obedience, I know none he holds on mine."---

“He is noble, damsel,” said the man haughtily; “let that suffice thee.”---“If he be noble, let him prove it,” said Genevieve, “by shewing all gentleness to a female left in the guard of a noble knight, who hath most suddenly and strangely left her.”---“Mass!” said another who joined them, “this dainty maiden deems there is but one paramour in the world for her; cheer thee, damsel, shalt have a host anon, men-at-arms and all.”---“Curb thy loose tongue,” said the other, who saw Genevieve almost dead at his words, “and let me lead the lady on.” “In the name of Heaven, gentle sir,” said Genevieve.---“By the mass, a heretic!” cried the other, “or thou wouldst have called some blessed saint, and never have troubled Heaven for the matter.”---“Alas, you seem of gentler speech than this wild man,” said Genevieve, turning to the first, who continued to lead her horse; “in the name of whatever may win your ear, I implore you to tell me into what hands I have fallen, and where you are leading me.”

Her conductor, instead of answering, called to the driver of a horse-litter which appeared in sight, to halt. "Ah, ha!" cried the other, as two females, gaudily dressed, alit from it, with evident marks of reluctance and vexation; "ah, ah! my bonnibells---my laced muttons---descend---dismount---givè place---ye must foot it, my pretty does, unless some merciful man-at-arms or gentle squire of dames, take ye *en-croupe*."

"Vile hilding!--unnurtured slave!" said the incensed females---"is it thus thou talkest to ladies of our state?" He continued to laugh, and they to rail, while Genevieve stood amid the rude men and licentious women like an angel in the presence of fiends.---"Gentle dames," she said, trembling, "in the name of womanhood, plead for me."

"Is this the beauty so much prized?" said one of them, as Genevieve raised her veil to speak.---"This helps not," said her companion, lifting her from her horse, and placing her with the female attendant in the litter.---"One word----but one word," she cried,

forcing back the curtain.---“Am I in the power of him they call the Bishop of Toulouse?”---The man regarded her with a look of compassion for the first time.---“If the Bishop of Toulouse be friend of thine,” he said, “would thou wert;” and he closed the door of the litter.

The brief winter day was now on the wane. The party, who appeared to have halted merely for refreshment, prepared for departure, and, heedless of the mute despair of Genevieve, and the clamorous grief of her attendant, amid the clash of arms and the sound of trumpets, all the train rode on, the bannered lilies of France glittering in the van.

CHAPTER IV.

When Greeks join'd Greeks then was the tug of war :
The wearied battle sweat, and conquest bled.

LEE'S *Alexander*.

THE man of mighty mind, the Bishop of Toulouse, had not slumbered during the interval. He had received the intelligence of the escape of the queen and Genevieve from his power, while engaged in the aid of his ally, (as has been mentioned) : on the principle that made him sometimes foment, and sometimes conciliate the constant feuds of the neighbouring dignitaries and barons---the principle of a politician of old---*Divide et impera*. The first effect of his rage at this intelligence would have cost the messenger his life, had it not been qualified by other and more welcome tidings that arrived al-

most at the same moment. By his emissaries in Paris the bishop learned that king Philip was about to dispatch troops and treasure in the cause of the Crusaders, under the conduct of an unknown leader ; and, what was of higher importance at that juncture, that Count Raymond, who was always satisfied with slight advantages and feeble efforts, had retired to his territorial city of Toulouse, conceiving that he had risked enough for the Albigensis, and was again employing powerful agency at Rome, to effect his reconciliation with the pope. From other mis-sives he learned, that many of the more powerful barons of Languedoc, whose vassals were of the new sect, incensed at the slaughter and spoliation of their people, murmured against the severity of the crusade, and waited but a signal to take the abdicated place of Count Raymond. To all this was added the intelligence, that Count Simon de Montfort, to whose pretensions and high-established fame the court of Rome had hitherto conceded every thing, was

slowly recovering from his wounds, and would not be able to take the field till the following spring. The bishop instantly raised the siege, and returned to his castle at Beaucaire. There he held a feast; dignitaries and nobles thronged to it, and the result was all that his ambition could aspire to: to the devout, he suggested the scandal that a mob of heretics, a vile peasantry, should yet defy the power of the nobles, and the thunders of the church, and wander about propagating their vile abuses of religion; to the warlike he declaimed on the disgrace the cause of the church must suffer, if they allowed their lances to rust, because Simon de Montfort's wounds were unhealed; to the rapacious, he promised the plunder of the lands of those barons who secretly favoured the cause of the Albigeois, and to the timid and politic (who were the fewest of the party) he hinted the danger of the powerful lords of Languedoc rising in aid of their distressed vassals, if some strong effort were not made, some powerful blow struck

on the instant. The hall rung with acclamations; the bishop seized the moment, "when their hearts were jocund and sublime," to propose himself as their leader. The place of rendezvous was fixed at Nismes; and the next morning's dawn saw the warlike prelate ride, in his own proud element, at the head of fifteen hundred lances, to meet the Crusaders in that city.

He had vital reasons for urging matters with the utmost dispatch: he was ignorant of the late reconciliation between Philip and his queen, and knowing that the troops had marched in consequence of his belief of her detention, and would be recalled as soon as the truth of her escape was known, he hasted to put himself at their head before that intelligence had reached king Philip, satisfied that he might then defy both the pope and king, when commanding a force that would not lightly desert such a leader. With these hopes and views he hurried on at the head of his train towards Nismes, as he had learned that the troops of King Philip had marched

in that direction. We mention these circumstances as explanatory of the scenes that followed Genevieve's capture, to which we have now to reconduct our readers.

The party travelled all the evening, and at night-fall arrived at the town of Nismes. Genevieve, uncertain of her destination, felt at last from the slower motion of the litter, and the increasing tumult of voices and trampling of horses, that the party had reached their place of rendezvous. The lights of the town of Nismes began to glimmer through the curtains of her litter. Knights and peers, with their tumultuous cavalcades, rode away in the search of abode in the town, thinning not imperceptibly to Genevieve's ears the concourse and the noise. Yet she watched the parting of every knight and noble with his train, as if a friend rode away from her unprotected side. The litter still continued to proceed, though the attendants appeared to be diminished to a few individuals. At length it stopped, and Genevieve, who was assisted to alight from it, found herself

in a place which she could not compare with any other that sight or even imagination had ever before presented her with.

It was a vast area, the ground unequal and frequently encumbered with huge masses of stone, of which some appeared the effect of recent dilapidation, and others were clothed with hoary moss, the growth of centuries. There was no roof; and the moon, "walking in brightness" above her head, shed her full light on masses of building, that, viewed even from the distance where she stood in the centre of the area, seemed to have been the work of antediluvian giants; arches above arches, supporting ponderous seats of marble, rose to a height that made the eye giddy; yet, in all this vast range of edifice there was no vestige of human habitation. The stars glimmered through the tenantless arches, and the foliage waved lightly to the moon, as the breeze sighed through this vast and desolate monument of departed power. Genevieve had beheld all that was great, sublime,

and even terrific in nature ; but it was with a new sensation of awe that she gazed round her on this stony desert of man's creation—this huge skeleton, that might once have been clothed with myriads of population.* She would have enquired where she was ; but the thought of her own fearful situation rushed on her, and she was silent.

When they had advanced a short space, the man who conducted her, suddenly lowering his torch, pointed to her to enter a small recess, where was a seat of stone, over which he threw his mantle ; and then placing the torch in a nook, made a sign to her female attendant to withdraw, while he himself retired. So utterly subdued were her spirits, so hopeless was her heart, that she made no attempt to deprecate this ominous movement, but by clasping her hands in mute and unheeded supplication.

He soon after returned with refreshments, of which he pressed her to partake ;

* The Amphitheatre of Nismes.

and she then recovered breath to implore him to tell her in whose hands she was, and for what purpose she had been brought to a place so dreary. The man gazed on her a moment, and, answering only by a laugh that froze her blood, again withdrew.

Starting from her trance of stupefaction, she tried to examine the place, and discover if it afforded even the most desperate means of escape. A large aperture in the wall of the recess where she was placed, gave her a view of the area below, on which the moonlight fell in full lustre. Under one of the lower arches, a band of armed men were seen carousing by the light of torches, which they had fixed against the walls. Two of distinguished port, and fully armed except their heads, were walking at some distance, and occasionally appeared to issue orders and make inquiries, or interfere to check the rude mirth of the revellers. One of them was evidently the leader of the band they had encountered that day; the other seemed an ancient knight: but, whoever they

might be, they were evidently objects of the deepest reverence to the rest; as, at their lightest word, one or other darted forth from beneath the arch, with his flaring torch, seeming to demand their pleasure. And Genevieve, amid all her terrors, could not help admiring the darkly-seen and solitary grandeur of these forms, moving alone, amid that vast pile, like its former inhabitants returned to visit earth; while the sudden flashes of light and involutions of darkness, caused by the gleam and disappearance of the torches, seemed like shadows of gigantic spectres following each other, in their majestic flight from the deserted ruins.

In a short time, the knights, apparently to shun the noise of their followers, quitted that part of the area, and walked nearer the aperture, within which Genevieve withdrew herself, while every word of their conference came to her distinctly in the stillness of the night. The younger appeared at first to be rebuking the elder, for addressing him by some title that he wished to disclaim.—“Be it as

thou wilt, Sir Knight of the Lilies," said the other, who happened to be our old friend Sir Aymer—"but what dost thou mean by this masking? Why art thou thus disguised at the head of a valiant, potent band?"—"To accomplish two the dearest purposes I cherish," answered the other: "to deceive my father, and to confront and confound that proud prelate of Toulouse."

"That children should deceive their parents," said Sir Aymer, "is doubtless the law of nature, or of custom, which comes to the same thing. I had that virtue in my youth, but let that pass. Wherefore chafest thou so hotly against the warlike prelate?"—"I hate him—hate him deadly," answered the younger speaker, inhaling the air as he spoke, like a reined and impatient steed. "The throne of King Philip is but a toy—an infant's bauble; while its power, if not its seat, is shared by his insolent, encroaching vassals, the Bishop of Toulouse and Count Simon de Montfort. How the proud prelate will chafe when he sees *who* leads the lances

of King Philip.”—“ Men say he rides at the head of two thousand lances himself,” answered Sir Aymer; “ and thinkest thou he will lightly yield them to another leader?”—“ Lightly or not, he *shall* yield them,” said the other fiercely; “ the bull may bellow in his grange, but he will tremble when he hears the lion roar, and feels that he has dared to cross his path.”—“ Royal whelp,” said Sir Aymer, “ take heed that thou roar not too loud, ere thy fangs and claws be fully grown.”

The other was silent for a moment, and then said in a voice almost choked with passion—“ By Heaven, Sir Knight de Chastelroi, thou dost not suffer the privilege my indulgence has allowed thee of being my reprover to go into abeyance.”—“ Jesters are allowed their privilege, my liege,” said Sir Aymer; “ and perchance the office of a jester and a reprover are always the same; at least they are both alike the subjects of scorn and of neglect. But, meanwhile, spend not thy spleen on me, Sir Knight of the Lilies; hoard it all up for the Bishop of Toulouse. If all

report says be true, he will have enough to hoard and vent in his turn : all provocation that thou canst give him is light compared with that which awaits him.”---“ How meanest thou ?” said the other impatiently.---“ Even what I say, my liege : report reached me on the way, that Simon de Montfort himself is on his journey hither, and that his warlike dame hath flung plaster and cataplasm, cullis and cordial, at the leech’s head, and braced him in iron from head to heel. Some ears have heard his trumpets ; but that must be by witchcraft.”---“ Now, by Heaven ! I should wish to hear them this moment,” replied the interlocutor. “ Ha ! goes the game there?---then have I to confront the haughty prelate in his pride, and the brutal De Montfort in his borrowed power. The thought stirs my blood. Methinks we resemble three streams that I have seen falling from the mountains, narrow, feeble, and chafing with their rocky banks ; but when they dashed into the valley, and met together conflicting, how loud was their uproar, how

fierce their encounter !---the spray ascending up the silent rocks from which they fell, and the roar heard and felt among the mountains, which the conflict shook to their bases."---
“ It may be a magnificent metaphor,” said Sir Aymer ; “ but in my poor opinion it resembles more what I have seen in a *moral-ity*, when the fool, iniquity, and the devil, after playing their several passions, met at last on the stage, and belaboured each other, to the huge contentment of the audience. A merry, mad world,” Sir Aymer added, half sighing, half whistling apart to himself, “ when three bands of the Crusaders meet to destroy the heretics, and then pause first to ask, whether they must not previously knock out each other’s brains?”---“ But thou wilt stand by me,” said the younger knight ; “ thou wilt doubtless stand by me :” he spoke doubtingly.---“ With heart and brand, with life and limb, my liege,” answered Sir Aymer ; and when he had thus spoken with all the energy of feudal faith and chivalric loyalty, he added some light words, intimat-

ing the facility with which females might be won, when the approaching war must make wooers scarce.

The other speaker appeared to withdraw from the topic with that disgust which youth feels at the ill-affected follies of age—"By Heaven," he said, "thou preachest better than a Dominican, for thou dost thoroughly distaste one of sin and folly. To hear one so old and yet so vicious, is merely a disgust to youth."—"I vicious? I defy thee," said Sir Aymer, "prove me such, and I will abide thy questioning."—"Darest thou deny that thou canst over-drink even the Abbot of Normoutier—that most bibulous and misquoting churchman?"—"The church gives both example and precept," quoth Sir Aymer: "Some choose the former, and some the latter: for myself, I adopt the example, not the precept, of the church; and on that quarrel I will fight while there is a grape to be pressed in Languedoc."—"That thou wilt game with a page, cheat with a jongleur, and lie with a palmer, who pretendeth that he hath been in the land of Armeny?"—"The former was a

churchly vice, the latter a princely one; for I have heard *thee* forswear thyself at tennis like a ——; but all simile fails. Proceed; I have no doubt to prove myself virtuous at the last.”—
“That thou art a most unconscionable——?”
—“Nay, thou art the devil reproving sin. Whereto tends this goodly masque thou art acting this night? Wherefore art thou apart from thy train amid these solitary ruins? And what means that damsel in the nook (the beatings of whose heart I can hear as I walk), whom thou didst bear away to-day from her guide and champion? Ha, my royal hawk, thou art about to pounce on thy quarry, and yet reproving a poor mousing owl like me, that am fain to blink for my prey sometimes in a barn.”—His companion laughed vehemently at the reprisal of the old knight, and then swore deeply that nothing pleased him more in the adventure than sending her champion on a wild emprise to tilt against a tower inhabited by spirits—“By our Lady of Notre Dame,” he cried, “unless I had that fanatic dotard, that Monk of Montcalm, to aid me

with his tales of witchcraft, and I know not what, I never could have won that saucy stripling (who hath not a hair on his cheek, though he presumes to love) to sever from her side."---"Speak not so lightly of spirits and witchcraft, 'specially in this lonely place," said Sir Aymer, crossing himself; "thou art not an infidel! Marry this darkness and loneliness were enough to convert a man." (The train had retired, and a single solitary torch shed its light over the vast extent of the area.)---"An infidel! I scorn thy words: I am about to convert an heretic, and when I have taught her her creed, thou shalt confirm her in it."---Sir Aymer laughed again, and then demanded, in a careless tone, if he knew the name of the knight whom he had robbed of his prize with the unconscious help of the Monk of Montcalm.---"Name," repeated the other; "name---methinks they call him Sir Amiralde."

The steps of Sir Aymer were instantly checked, and his tone altered. "Sir Amiralde," he repeated; "he who fell in our mad encounter with the Albigeois headed by Raymond of Toulouse."---"Ay,---fell like thee and many others, to rise again."---"He who did good ser-

vice to Queen Ingelberg, pleading in her cause on an occasion thou wottest of.”---“ He was overpaid by a kiss of the queen’s hand ; ---a landless, birthless, nameless, nothing---knighted for some mad exploit of chivalry.” ---“ I heard he saved the life of King Philip at the battle of Bovines,” said Sir Aymer, with increasing emphasis : “ was that the mad deed of chivalry thou speakest of ? ” ---“ And if he did,” answered the other, “ his exploit, as thou lovest to term it, prevented the crown of France from descending on a brow that would have worn it better. Deemest thou I owe him deep obligation for such exploit ? ” and he dwelt on the word maliciously.

“ Sir Knight of the Lilies,” said Sir Aymer, “ since such it is thy pleasure to be called, here I pause. I have a foolish fondness for that boy, and somehow cannot bear to see him wronged. Were it the loose leman of a common youth ; but no, no---I cannot brook this.” ---“ What dost thou, what *darest* thou mean ? ” said the other in wrath : “ is not the boy a plebeian ? ---is not the maiden a heretic ? ” ---“ Plebeian---heretic---what thou

wilt," answered Sir Aymer; " she is to me as sacred in yonder nook, as an enshrined nun in her cloister: and I say, Sir Knight of the Lilies, that in *her* cause, her champion and protector being absent by base fraud---fraud, mark me---I will wield brand against a host!"---" Traitor-knight!" exclaimed the other, " wilt thou turn thy brand against thy ---" " Not for my life!" answered Sir Aymer, sheathing the sword he had half drawn. " But this I say, that if thou doest young Amiralde such deep wrong, never more will Sir Aymer and his fifty faithful lances ride by thy standard---never more will---" " Hence, dotard, with thy threats!" said the other, stamping in fury: " hence with thyself, thy menace, and thy men-at-arms! and in thine absence I will have leisure to weigh which I hold in the greater disdain." He broke from Sir Aymer as he spoke, and in a moment after Genevieve had the horror to see him burst into the recess where she sat, his inflamed visage and flashing eye betokening that the late conference had done aught but

assuage the passions that already burned too fiercely. His first impression was evidently that of awe---the awe that the presence of perfect beauty inspires ; and he stood before her, now first seen, like one who has broken into a sanctuary to plunder it, and, dazzled by the glory of the holy ornaments, stands amazed at his intended sacrilege. Genevieve was the first to recover herself, and assume, at least, the courage necessary for speaking. “ Noble knight,” she said tremulously, “ I thank you for your care of me in my journey, and for my quiet though somewhat lonely lodgment here ; and I crave to know when I may be permitted to rejoin my party ; when my thanks shall be doubled---yea, trebled?” And in agonizing sincerity she pressed her hands on her bosom.---“ Fair maiden,” said the youth, gathering courage from her sweet and timid accents, from which he drew a favourable but false augury of the pliancy of her character,---“ fair maiden, thy thanks are most grateful guerdon ; but, perchance, I may ambition a higher and dearer reward.”

---“ The thanks of a noble knight shall be added to mine,” said Genevieve, in a voice still more earnest, “ for the protection vouchsafed to his deserted companion.”---“ *His thanks?*” repeated the youth, in a tone of high disdain; “ his thanks? Yes, he owes me much, and thou dost well to turn me over to him for payment; but I mean in his absence to exact it from a fairer debtor.”---“ If thou meanest my ransom, Sir Knight,” said Genevieve, who struggled with her own conviction to misunderstand him, “ and if thou wilt deign to accept ransom for one of nameless birth, it shall be paid. I have jewels---jewels of price: all, all shall be placed in thine hands, so thou wilt restore me to my friends in safety and honour.” And at this moment she would indeed have willingly placed the costly gift of the queen in his hands, on the conditions she named.---“ I will accept thy ransom,” said the youth approaching her, “ when thou canst shew me a ruby with a tint like thy lip, or a diamond with a beam like thine

eye ; or, would I had not to add, a pearl pale and precious as thy cheek." Her cheek was indeed pale.---" Noble knight," she cried, no longer daring to misunderstand him, " noble knight, have mercy on me !" and she fell on her face at his feet.---" Mercy on thee !" said the youth, walking a few paces from her, and evidently embarrassed at her appeal,---" mercy on thee ! And what mercy hast thou on me ? Is not each word, each look, each movement, doing the work of many daggers on mine heart ? Maiden, thou hast bowed thyself before me : I bow to thee in my turn ; and, trust me, no common suppliant pleads. Pity, and love me." " Oh, Amirald ! where art thou ?" cried Genevieve, in agony unutterable.---" Amirald again !" said the youth with fierce impatience : " what, is thy fancy so weak and worthless, dwelling on that boy---that stripling, blushing and beardless ? *Thou* for whom, but for thy plebeian birth and accursed creed, the lances of every knight from Nismes to Paris might be shivered, and---" " Oh,

let them be my advocates !” cried Genevieve---
“ my lowly birth, my hated creed ; let them
plead for me ! I am unworthy of thy mean-
est, thought, noble knight : spurn me---dis-
miss me---crush me to the earth !”

“ And *Amirald*,” said the youth, pacing
the narrow recess furiously---“ Amirald?---
no Sir Amirald:---it is plain whence such
familiar speech hath its rise between an he-
retic peasant and a belted knight.”---“ Believe
that too,” said Genevieve ; “ believe all that
is vile of me---all that can make me unwor-
thy of thee.”---“ And if I did,” said her
companion, “ yet hardly can I believe it,”
he added, gazing on her pure and pallid
beauty : “ and if I did, darest thou play the
coy one with *me*, when by thine own con-
fession thou hast acted other part with that
stripling, that boy ?”---“ Oh no, no,” cried
Genevieve in agony ; “ I wronged, I belied
him : he is innocent as I am : disregard, dis-
dain me---but doubt not of the truth and
loyalty of Sir Amirald.”---“ So much zeal
for one without name, without descent,

without lineage, and all under the name of gratitude!" said the youth, retreating from her with a proud step, and measuring her with a prouder eye. "What, then, canst thou deny, under the name of *love*, to one who wooes thee in the highest title that ever reached the ear of plebeian damsel? The fairest dames in France have courted the distinction thou hast scorned. It is not for me to sue. Vile peasant, thou may'st count amongst the highest honours of thy life, that of being the paramour of Lewis the Dauphin of France."

At the word Genevieve uttered a shriek of ecstasy. She sprang on her feet, and, tearing the ring from her finger, cried, "Art thou the Dauphin, Prince Lewis of France? Then am I safe as the daughter of King Philip in a warded tower, with princes for her guard. Thou canst not destroy the peace and fame of her who saved thy mother's life! The scar is on my breast---the ring is in thine hand---the proof is in thine heart!" she exclaimed, with increasing

energy, as she saw Prince Lewis bend over the ring, which she almost forced into his hand. “ Oh, never can the son destroy the preserver of the mother ! Approach---touch me now, if thou darest ! ” Then her enthusiasm subsiding, and her habitual feelings of submission to lofty rank recurring---“ Oh no, if thou *canst*——,” she cried sinking on her knees before the Dauphin.

Prince Lewis, agitated by many feelings, in silence held the ring to the light afforded by the torch, and examined it closely. The report of his mother’s deliverance, and escape by aid of the courage of a female prisoner, had reached him. He had heard also the report, which perhaps touched him nearer, of Sir Amiralld being appointed as the protector of a fair heretic, on her progress to join her friends at Toulouse, and had immediately resolved to be a personal judge of that beauty whose fame was so fair ; but he had not expected to behold in that female the preserver of his mother ; on whom, amid all his licentious propensities and fiery

passions, he doted fondly. "It is true," he said at length, "thou hast given a pledge which shall be nobly redeemed, maiden. Thou art the preserver of our mother; I acknowledge the ring of queen Ingelberg. Rise; thou art as safe as if thou wert the daughter of Philip of France, in a royal castle. Why dost thou tremble? The faith of a knight, the honour of a prince, are pledged for thy safety. Rise, and receive this hand in pledge that thy honour is valued as mine own."

"Princely Dauphin---royal lord," cried Genevieve, writhing in ecstasies of gratitude still at his feet, and struggling to kiss the border of his mantle. As he withdrew it, her lips touched his hand. "Forbear, forbear," said Prince Lewis; "such gratitude is dangerous. Forbear: "---and yet his fingers again sought the caress. "And may I not," he said, "may I not yet gaze on thee, as I should on a portrait? may I not gaze on thee as I should on a sacred image?"--- "Royal lord," said Genevieve shrinking, "I pray you suffer me to depart: it is easy to form

a generous resolution, but it is most difficult to keep it.” — “By Heaven,” said Prince Lewis, “I begin to feel the truth of what thou sayest in every vein. Ho, my banner-man, Eustache !” he cried, “where is Sir Aymer? hath he quitted these walls?” — “He walks discontentedly, some few paces hence, my liege,” said Eustache. — “Summon him on the instant ! Sir Aymer,” he said, as the old knight slowly and reluctantly approached — “Sir Aymer, thou hast done the devoir of a loyal friend and true knight in chiding me ; and I will do that of a prince in requital. I hold in my hand,” taking Genevieve’s, “a fair pledge for thy fealty ; and if thy faith to me depend on the safe and honourable usage of this damsel, Sir Aymer and his fifty lances will be at the Dauphin’s side again to-morrow. Wilt thou be thyself the protector of the maiden ?” — “In faith, my liege,” answered the knight, “had I not seen the dame, I might have undertaken such office ; but as it is, does your Grace think me marble, or a mummy, that you trust me with a charge that

St. Anthony's temptations were very snow-balls to."

Prince Lewis smiled internally at the success of his stratagem; for he well knew when he made the proposal, that Sir Aymer, in his affectation of youthful gallantry, would decline it. "How shall I bestow thee, damsel?" he said with assumed perplexity. "Thine accursed creed forbids thee the shelter of a nunnery, and I know none of my train with whom thou mightest be in safe keeping, till the return of young Amirald. Eustache," he cried, giving his bannerman a look which he well understood, "seek out some grave and well-reputed matron in the town, and place the damsel with her till——" "Thanks and blessings," interrupted Genevieve, pressing her lips to the hem of his mantle; then dropping her veil, she gave her hand to her new conductor.

Prince Lewis turned hastily, like one who wrests away his mind abruptly from some unpleasant thoughts, and, accosting Sir Aymer, as if he wished to divert his atten-

tion also, he pointed to where a few streaks of grey in the clouds indicated the approach of morning. "Be those clouds," he said, "that gather so darkly on yonder hill?"—"If they be," answered his companion, "they are clouds that will burst in thunder soon. In that very line is the Bishop of Toulouse marching by credible report; and, as I look, methinks those clouds change their places like the forms of men in motion."

As he spoke, the trampling of horses was heard, and Bernard de Vaugelas and Pierre de Limosin were seen riding at full speed towards them. They checked their steeds when they saw the Dauphin,—“Tidings my liege, and of high concernment,” they cried, alighting from their horses. “First, welcome, gentlemen and friends,” said Lewis; “and next for your tidings.”—“We seek your Highness by command of your royal mother,” said Vaugelas, “who detached us from her train for the purpose.”—“How fares our dearest mother?” said Lewis. —“Well; and commends her to your Highness: and we have ridden two hours before the dawn, to bring

you tidings that the Bishop of Toulouse is at hand with fifteen hundred lances at his back.” —“ And *we* are here, prepared to give him welcome,” replied the Dauphin.—“ He hath marched with such speed, that he was fain to halt with his overwearied band on yonder hill—(Prince Lewis cast a look of defiance and enmity in the direction);—and thy careful mother enjoins thee to beware the meeting with that proud and potent prelate.”—“ That is a woman’s counsel,” said the Dauphin. “ What is thine, De Limosin ?” —“ That your Highness beard and brave the hot churchman in his pride. He is to enter the town by dawn, to celebrate the mass in the cathedral of Nismes; and then to offer himself as leader of the armies of the church, to the assembled knights and peers.”—“ Ho, mine armour !” cried Lewis, starting as from a trance; “ mine armour, knave !” —“ Your Highness is already armed,” said Vaugelas, “ as well by the presence of your faithful knights as by your stoutest harness.”—“ I meant not that,” said Lewis, vexed at per-

ceiving that his emotion was observed; "I meant that this armour was too heavy. I must haste to my lodging to change it. Where is Eustache? but I sent him on other errand. This news hath bewildered me, I think," he added with a forced smile. "Noble knights, gentlemen, friends, may I depend on your aid on the morrow, when we meet the proud prelate?"---"As firmly as on the brand your Highness leans on," answered the knights.---"I must haste to the town," said Lewis; "I must rouse and summon my noble friends to join me on the morrow: the *morrow*? by Heaven, it is already bright dawn! There is not a moment to be lost: Sir Aymer, thou wilt with us?"---"So please you, my liege," said Sir Aymer, "I have had somewhat a restless night, and have also a foreboding that to-morrow will be a doubtful if not a bloody day; and methinks I would willingly secure some mortal rest in this world, before I am dismissed to my final one."---"Come then with me, De Vaugelas, and noble De Limosin; your spirits are untired:

come with me, and let us try if a son of France or a shaveling churchman hath most influence with her noble and puissant chivalry.”—“We wait on your highness, and demand but to be put to the proof,” said the knights.—“If I meet Sir Amirald,” said Sir Aymer, “I will bid him haste to your aid, my liege.”—“And when I am king of France, I will appoint thee to the office of my jester in requital,” answered Prince Lewis, as he hastened toward the town, where all that morning he toiled among the knights and peers who had followed his standard, exacting renewed oaths of fidelity, and receiving assurances of it, grounded more on their hatred to the Bishop of Toulouse than on their attachment to the ambitious, voluptuous, and vindictive Dauphin. In these anxious conferences two hours passed away, and the morning sun broke on the city of Nismes.

CHAPTER V.

Come one—come all. Yon rock shall fly
From its firm base as soon as I.

Lady of the Lake.

By its earliest light the Bishop of Toulouse and his train had ridden into the city. Immediately on his arrival he hasted to the cathedral to celebrate mass; but as he passed through the aisle, he was struck by the sight of a number of knights, who were ranged like statues on either side, completely armed and with their visors closed; and who returned slight or rather no obeisance to the bishop, as he marched amid a train of nobles and ecclesiastics towards the altar. Their appearance caught the eye of the bishop as he passed on amid ranks of bowing churchmen and kneeling knights craving his benediction, which he dispensed with due solemnity, and

then, as he approached the altar, and prepared to change his robes for the ceremony, sent his crosier-bearer to demand of the knights why they assumed such hostile and unwonted guise in the church. The knights answered not a word, and kept their visors down. The ceremony began : again a messenger was despatched to require them to depart, if they joined not in external devotion at least, while the holy mysteries were celebrating. The crosier-bearer, who delivered the second message, seemed to himself, as he said, to walk amid the pillars of a cathedral, so stern, erect, and motionless stood the figures ; and he returned with another report of the impenetrable silence of the unknown knights.—The sacred bell was rung, and every head and knee was bent to the earth at the sound, but those of the party that filled the aisle. At the conclusion of the ceremony, which the bishop performed with imposing dignity, yet not altogether without some misgivings of heart, he prepared to address the congregation, which was composed

of his own train of knights and men-at-arms, (mixed with the troops of king Philip,) from the altar where he stood; that his appeal might want no influence of the spiritual power in aid of the forces of the temporal, with which he felt himself amply furnished. His address, powerful and eloquent, was received with loud acclamations by his own party; and they were even echoed by some of king Philip's troops, with whom the character of the warlike prelate stood high. The mute and visored figures who filled the aisle of the cathedral were observed to exchange whispers with each other at this latter sound. "For you, noble knights," said the bishop, "though your demeanour hath been somewhat discourteous and full of mystery, though ye have refused to raise your visors, or to utter speech, or to join in the rites of holy church, we honour you as the leaders of those troops whom king Philip, that faithful son of the church, hath sent in aid of her cause, now at its utmost peril; and demand of you (and such demand ye will perchance deign to

answer) to know to whose hands ye are commissioned to entrust them?---A single knight stepped forward, and stood in the centre of the aisle, confronting the bishop as he stood by the high altar, and without raising his visor or altering his posture, answered, "To the hands of him who led them here."----
"And who is he?" demanded the bishop.----
"Lewis, the dauphin of France," said the knight, raising his visor, while all the knights of his train at the signal made a similar disclosure; and the Bishop of Toulouse beheld around him the countenances of many of the noblest and the most hostile peers and knights of France.

For a moment his presence of mind forsook him. He had believed Prince Lewis far distant, waging unsuccessful war in England, and wasting his time and troops before Dover Castle, in consequence of the reproach of King Philip, who, on the mention of his son's exploits and successes in England, remarked, he had not yet got *its key*. Yet Prince Lewis was on the spot confronting him, and at the head of Philip's

troops. For a moment, we say, his self-possession forsook him; but in the next he recovered himself, and descending from the steps of the altar, advanced to meet the Dauphin.---“ My liege prince and future sovereign,” he said with dignity, “ we greet you well with the homage of true hearts and strong hands, armed alike in the cause of your royal house and of the church. But wherefore hath your grace come upon us thus in disguise ?”---“ Lord bishop,” said prince Lewis, with somewhat of a grim smile, “ men ever go to a doubtful feast masked.” The Bishop of Toulouse passed on to greet the knights of Prince Lewis’s train; and it was admirable to see the address with which he hailed those whom he deemed the most accessible, and the dignity with which he met the most hostile; while from time to time he bent his ear to a lame and diminutive figure who hobbled beside him, and seemed to be playing the fool amid the magnificent pageantry of that ecclesiastical drama. This was no other than Sir Ambrose, (the *ci-devant*

Deacon Mephibosheth,) who was whispering to him intelligence of which he resolved in this exigency instantly to avail himself. The ceremonial of meeting over, the bishop again retired to the altar, near which Prince Lewis and his train ranged themselves in firm and steady line; and exalting his voice, "Nobles, and knights of France," he cried, "I have rendered the duty of a subject to the son of my liege lord the king, and I must now render it to the son of Him whose minister I am, and in whose temple I stand. In *his* cause we are armed, and his favour alone can bid our banners float in triumph; but shall we dare to hope for that favour if those banners are grasped by the hand that caresses an heretic? Yes, noble peers, ye well may look amazed! Prince Lewis, who claims the honour of leading you, nourishes in his bosom a heretic concubine, and, stained with such mortal sin, is unworthy to fight even among the meanest ranks of the army of the church."

At this charge, the substance of which had been overheard by Sir Ambrose in whis-

pered conversation among Prince Lewis's knights, and had been instantly communicated to the bishop, who seized on it as a desperate defence in his extremity---at this charge, a murmur was heard among the crusaders, many of whom began to cast looks of disdain and distrust on the Dauphin. Prince Lewis's soul rushed to his face, not with shame, but with rage; and, instead of addressing the knights, he turned fiercely on the bishop---“And is it thou,” he cried---“thou who darest to reprove thy prince for lightness!”

“For thy foul slanders, prince,” said the bishop with an insolent affectation of meekness, “thou hast my pity and my prayers. Methinks the fair beauty, the lady Blanche,* and the respect thou owest to the royal house of Castile, should recall thee from wandering in quest of light and lawless love.”---“Insolent and meddling priest!” exclaimed Lewis, maddening at being thus checked and schooled in the presence of his

* Blanche of Castile, wife of Lewis, and daughter of Alphonso and Elinor of England.

nobles, “ what hast thou to do with thy prince’s domestic concerns, or with his royal right? the which he will maintain in spite and in scorn of thee! Judge, lords, how lightly this proud churchman will prize your honours, when he dares thus check your sovereign in the presence of his subjects.”---“ Ungrateful as thou art forgetful!” cried the bishop, kindling in his turn---“ is it thus thou speakest of churchmen, to whom thy father owes his throne and life? Who, at the battle of Bovines, marshalled the array, and fought in the van of King Philip’s host?---who won the day that else had seen King Philip throneless?---Guerin, the warlike bishop of Senlis.* Who, on that day, armed only with a mace of iron, (for the holy man would not draw sword, to avoid the guilt of bloodshed,) felled to the earth and made prisoner the stout Earl of Salisbury?---Philip de Dreux, bishop of Beauvais. And is it for *thee* to scoff at churchmen? Profane prince, prouder heads and stouter

* Vide, for this and the following, L’Histoire de France, par M. Velly.

hearts than thine have bowed, and *shall* bow yet, to their power. Remember Henry, emperor of Germany, doing penance barefoot and in winter at the gates of a pontiff's castle."—"Where the holy father," interrupted Lewis, "was revelling with the Countess Matilda."—"Out on thee, ribald—reviler! Remember examples nearer home: remember Henry of England, lashed by monks at the tomb of the holy Becket; and his son John kneeling, but as yesterday, to receive his crown, at the footstool of the legate Pandulf."—"Remember *thou* also," retorted Lewis, "the noble letter of Eudes, duke of Burgundy, to my father; wherein he counselled him neither to make peace nor war at the command of pope or cardinal; where he swore to aid him with his vassals, treasure and right arm in their spite, and to enter into no treaty with them without his sovereign: remember the answer of King Philip to thy master, pope Innocent, that he owed his royaume to God and his sword, and thought scorn to hold them by per-

mission of a priest.* If our annals hold such matter as thou hast quoted, (eternal shame to the churchmen who write them!) their brighter pages show many an example of high resolve and noble defiance to the insolence of priestly power.”---“ Judge, peers of France,” cried the bishop, “ how fit is he to lead the armies of the church, who thus insults her minister and defies her power ! Hence, prince Dauphin ; waste if thou wilt the troops and treasures of France in nameless exploits and fruitless conquests on English land ; but dream not of leading the armies of the faithful. Men mocked at the laxity of King John, when the deputies of Rouen came to him to implore succours for the last city that held out for him in Normandy, and found him playing at chess ; and how much seemlier were it that the crusaders should demand where was their leader, and be answered, ‘ Dallying in his tent in the arms of a cursed heretic.’ ”---“ The heretic shall be burnt,” cried Sir Ambrose, (who had

* Vide M. Velly.

not forgotten his rancour against the luckless Genevieve ;) “ she shall be burnt with fire.”---“ Traitor -priest !” cried Lewis, losing all self-command, and laying his hand on his sword.---“ Impious prince,” said the bishop, (while Sir Ambrose retreated behind him,) “ is it in the house of God that thou assailest his servant ?”

The knights interposed, and Prince Lewis, sheathing his half-drawn sword and stamping with fury, exclaimed in a choked voice, “ How long, my lords of France, will ye see your prince baited by these cowed and mitred blood-hounds ? Is there a noble among you---a knight---a *Frenchman*, gentlemen, who will fight under other standard, when his sovereign’s is displayed ? or join in other *cri d’armes*, when the word is *Montjoie St. Denis* ?”

The last words, uttered with the utmost power of the Dauphin’s voice, were echoed by all his train ; and even by many of the bishop’s, who yielded to the feeling of the moment : and the cathedral of Nismes, cloister, aisle, and roof, rang to the cry of

Montjoie St. Denis! But at this moment, louder than all the acclamations, was heard the sound of trumpets blown at a short distance, and announcing some distinguished approach. The Bishop of Toulouse instantly recognised the trumpets of the Count de Montfort ; for in those days, as it is said, every one of high distinction had a blast or note sounded peculiar to themselves, and which was well known to hearers even at a remote distance. The bishop's countenance changed; but instantly commanding its expression, and adopting the only alternative of which the sudden and desperate emergency allowed, he quitted his station by the altar and advanced towards the Dauphin, wisely judging that he could more easily govern the volatile and impetuous Lewis even at the head of an army, than Simon de Montfort alone. As he advanced towards the prince, who, suspecting the meaning of this sudden movement, kept his hand on his dagger,---“ My liege prince,” he said, “ here let our strife end. I yield me to thy

claim : I transfer mine own to strengthen thine. Let us unite together against this Simon de Montfort, who will else prove too powerful for either singly. I will march under the oriflamme of my sovereign, but not beneath the banners of a subject." Lewis gazed on him for a space, as one would on some fierce animal, which, in the act to spring on and rend him, suddenly crouches at his feet, as dreading his treachery not less than his fury : " Be it so," he cried at last, like one taken by surprise ; " but if thou playest me false !" The bishop answered only by a significant gesture ; and while this short scene passed, the band of De Montfort came pouring into the cathedral church of Nismes : page, pursuivant, and even herald---such was the royal state in which Simon de Montfort rode---crowded into the aisles, followed by the men-at-arms, knights, and peers, who had gathered round his standard ; and last appeared De Montfort himself. He entered the aisle slowly and painfully, but still with an air of con-

scious and habitual superiority : his hair and beard were long and neglected ; his features, naturally harsh, and now squalid from long illness, had almost a ghastly expression ; and this was increased by the swathes in which his head was still bound. He wore his armour, but with evident difficulty, as still scarce able to bear its weight ; and over it, instead of a surcoat, was thrown a mantle lined with miniver. His gigantic form was bowed by infirmity ; but, though he moved with pain, he still tried to move erect, and his hollow voice had abated nothing of its usual haughty tone of command.

As he reached the centre of the aisle, and stood leaning on his huge sword, and looking round him with a portentous aspect of silent inquiry, he seemed like the gigantic spectre of some departed warrior, who had started from the grave in arms as he lay, at the last summons. The Bishop of Toulouse advanced to meet him ; while Prince Lewis whispered to the knights, by whom he was surrounded, and who had stood in amaze at the sudden ac-

commodation between the hostile prince and prelate.

“ My lord de Montfort,” said the bishop, “ we greet you well; and joy to behold that, though no longer able to lead the armies of the church, you come, in your christian zeal, to partake in her councils.”—“ I come,” replied De Montfort, rejecting the hand which the bishop extended towards him, half in greeting, half in benediction, and supporting himself on his sword, “ I come, lord bishop, not to partake of your councils, but to maintain my right—right that hath been wrested from me in mine involuntary absence, and in the forged and false belief of mine infirmity.”—“ Forged belief!” repeated the bishop, crossing himself, as he retreated in well-dissembled amaze, and glancing a look of hypocritical compassion around. “ Alas! my lords, he trembles as he speaks.”

“ If I tremble, it is with rage, not weakness, injurious prelate,” said De Montfort. “ But I see thy crafty aim: thou knowest mine hot ungoverned humour, and wouldst urge me to some wild speech or fierce act

that might work me dishonour in the eyes of this fair assembly.”—“ An’ I do not ere the day be done,” said the bishop internally, “ I will exchange my mitre for a coxcomb.”—“ Fair assembly,” cried the Dauphin,* hotly breaking in on the conference, “ and fair example in truth---where proud subjects meet to debate on the rights of princes to lead their own liege vassals to battle!

“ Boy!--princely boy!” said the veteran chief, with hollow voice and tremulous action; “ I saw thee take the noble rank of knight at Compiègne on the feast of Pentecost, from the hand of thy royal father Philip: I heard thee sworn to *l’amour de Dieu et des dames*.”

“ And I am an heretic,” said Sir Aymer half audibly, “ if his highness fulfil not one part of his vow to the letter.”

* The title of Dauphin was not assumed by the eldest sons of France till, I believe, the year 1343—more than a century after the period of this tale; but it is ascribed by Shakspeare to Prince Lewis in the play of King John, and “ *quid non ego homuncio?*”

“ I was thy sponsor,” continued De Montfort, extending his wrinkled hand, “ at the font which a true knight holds sacred as that of his baptism : and could I deem, when the spur was buckled on thy heel, and the sword first girded on thy stripling’s thigh, that thou, my *damoiseau*, my royal *varlet*,* wouldst ever draw it in quarrel against thy godfather-in-arms ? ”

Prince Lewis, touched by the recollection, was silent for a moment. The Bishop of Toulouse saw there was not a moment to be lost : “ And were it so,” he cried, “ what avails thy tale of Compiègne and feasts of Pentecost ? Does that give thee a title to usurp the Dauphin’s power, and make thy liege thy vassal ? What right dost thou pretend to in this fair assembly higher than that of other loyal peers of France ?---of me, for instance, or of the nobles who surround us ?”---“ What right ? ” cried De Montfort : “ is the question asked in jest or in scorn ? I claim

* Terms in chivalry applied to the knights probationers.

the command of the armies of the church (as thou well knowest, lord bishop) by commission from thy master the Pope himself.”

---“The holy father,” said the bishop, “was deceived by false reports, palliating if not concealing thine infirmity of health, and other causes that render such appointment null.”

---“*Other causes!*” cried De Montfort, biting his lip to repress his choler: “I claim it by consent, yea by command, of King Philip of France.”

---“He will revoke that consent,” said Prince Lewis, “when he knows it prejudicial alike to the interests of the church and the honour of his son.”

---“I claim it, then, in right of *this*,” cried De Montfort, striking his gauntleted hand on his sword, the blow making the paved floor of the church ring again: “and if that plea avail not,” he added with somewhat a tremor in his voice, “by these, and these, and these;” and he pointed proudly to the numerous wounds that his armour concealed, but under whose effect he was still evidently suffering.

---“Tell also where those wounds were received,” said

the bishop tauntingly. "Even in that wild battle to which thou led'st the chivalry of France in thy pride, and where its flower fell ---the victims of thy mad counsel."---"God's malison on thee, thou proud prelate!" cried De Montfort, yielding to his choler; "art thou, too, turned mine enemy? Ere I came hither men told me the Dauphin and thou were well nigh hurling your daggers at each other's heads in deadly wrath, and do ye now join together to bait me with your injuries and reproaches?"---"I sought and obtained the pardon of the holy prelate," said Lewis somewhat suddenly, "for mine unadvised speech."---"My royal son," said the bishop with more graceful dissimulation, "it was won ere it was asked." De Montfort shook his head, as he viewed them both with a stern but expressive smile,---"Prince and prelate, crafty as ye are, and crafty ye are as the fiend himself, ye do not deceive me: ye cannot by your hollow truce deceive these lords, who were witnesses but now to your deadly feud, and all but mortal strife. Peers,

and knights of France," he cried, "will you march under divided counsels and unfriendly leaders, or under the sole and faithful guidance of him, ye once named your Maccabee?" And the voice of the veteran, weakened by infirmity and emotion, faltered again: not so the thousand voices that shouted, "A De Montfort!---à De Montfort!" in answer.

"An' we make not in to the rescue, the field is lost," whispered the bishop to Prince Lewis:---"Out on thee," he thundered aloud, "thou bloody chief! Thy cruelties have stained the cause of the church, and brought defeat and disgrace on our arms!"---"Dissembling priest!" cried de Montfort kindling, "dost thou name cruelty?---thou, who at the sack of Lavaur didst chaunt the *Veni Creator*, with thy clergy, to the shrieks of four hundred heretics perishing in the flames!"*---"Their crime merited such punishment," interposed the bishop; "but thy cruelties were wanton

* Vide Velly, vol. iii. for this and what follows, and Perrin, *passim*.

as they were needless---the fruits of thy dark and bloody soul. Remember the foul assassination of the Count of Beziers!--heretic as he was, he was thy prisoner, entrusted to thine honour!"---"The murder of the lady of Lavour!" cried Lewis, "flung by thine order or thy hand into a pit, and whelmed with stones---the murder of a noble lady, thou stain to chivalry!"---"Thy sworn and solemn truce with the Count de Foix, ordained by the council of Lateran, violated in wanton perfidy!" exclaimed the bishop.---"Nor is thy perfidy less than thy pride!" continued Lewis, "*Simon en nom, et roi en faict.**"---"And thy rapacity surpassing both!" pursued the bishop, giving him no rest: "thou, who didst force the heiress of Bigorre from the arms of her wedded and rightful lord, and compel her to espouse thy son, that ye might seize and share her ample dower!"

* The expressions applied to De Montfort by Philip Augustus, when complaining of him to the Pope.

At this detail of the well-known enormities of Count Simon, a murmur spread even among his own train; and those who had hitherto stood nearest him, began, as in shame, to fall from his side.

De Montfort looked round him with a wild and vacant glare: his passions, always violent, in this desperate moment of shame and anguish utterly overpowered his reason; a kind of delirium seized him, and unsheathing his dagger, while he shouted "A De Montfort! à De Montfort!" he rushed to where Prince Lewis stood. The movement was so rapid and unlooked-for, that the blow, though aimed by the hand of a madman, might have been fatal, had not a young knight thrown himself between De Montfort and the Dauphin, and received it himself. It pierced between the joints of the vant-brace to his shoulder, and the blood burst from the wound.

At sight of the blood, which all believed to be that of the prince, a cry of consternation and horror burst from the whole assem-

bly : shouts of “ Treason ! treason ! ” and “ Make fast the gates ! ” resounded on every side, and all parties hastened to gather round the Dauphin. In the tumult, the attendants of De Montfort found means to bear him away, still struggling, but exhausted ; and his band of knights and followers, unable to justify the outrage they had witnessed with horror, departed to a man.

“ I will after him on the instant,” cried the bishop to Prince Lewis ; “ and while his blood is warm, I will paint to him his guilt in such horrors as shall make him deem the concession of his claim but light atonement for such deadly crime.”—“ After him, then, my noble friend,” answered the Dauphin, “ and St. Denis to speed ! ” Then as the bishop departed with his train, “ False priest ! ” he murmured, “ I trust thee as I love thee ; but where is the youth who preserved me from the arm of that mad assassin ? ” he cried, looking round him.—“ Here, my liege,” answered a youthful voice ; while the speaker,

making low obeisance, and raising his casque, disclosed the features of Sir Amiralld.

Lewis recoiled as if stung by an adder: he recovered himself, however, sufficiently to wave the knights who surrounded him to a distance; then in a hurried voice, "How now!" he said, "so soon returned?"—"In most happy time, my liege, did I return to meet the peril that menaced your grace."—"And you found the tower of Hugo empty?" cried Lewis, though Amiralld had not said so.—"As empty," answered the youth with emphasis, "as your grace's promise of safe conduct and honourable usage for my hapless companion."—"Sir boy," said Lewis, haughtily, "presume not, on the slight service thou hast rendered us, to deem that we will brook such look or language from a subject: but I see whence this strange boldness springs—thou lovest this errant damsel thyself. 'Tis well: and so thou provest thy loyalty as knight, by upbraiding thy prince; and thy faith as Crusader, by dar-

ing to love a heretic. Thou wouldst marry her too, I warrant, in thy romance of honourable love. Now, by St. Denis, I will keep the damsel in my custody, were it but to prevent such foul disgrace to the Church's cause."---"It will be more dishonoured, prince," replied the youth, "when a helpless and lonely maiden is the victim of a Crusader's violence and wrong."

"Avoid my presence!" said Lewis, stamping, "lest *she* prove not mine *only* victim, as thou darest to term it. By Heaven, I am well schooled between a hoary ruffian and a beardless stripling! Hold---stay---come back," he cried, as the youth, giving him a look that subjects sometimes can give, and princes sometimes must bear, was retiring,---"Come back, I say." Then with a struggle between pride and fear, "I doubt not thou wilt make this mad love of thine an excuse for deserting the cause of thy prince."---"No, my liege," answered the youth with a melancholy firmness; "my sovereign's forgetting his duty can never ab-

solve his subject. I will fight beneath thy standard with a wrung, but loyal heart ; and though in the anguish of my soul I think you a tyrant, and dare tell you so, never will I whisper such a sound in another ear, or brook to hear it from another lip.”—

“ Shame, shame,” cried Sir Aymer, who had ventured to linger near, “ that such faith should meet such guerdon ! Call him back, call him back, my liege. How can a son of France bear to be outdone in honour by his liege-man ?”

“ Royal lord,” cried Amirald, returning uncalled, and bending his knee to Lewis, “ be generous, and restore the maiden.”— “ Prince,” said Sir Aymer, with unusual spirit---“ prince, be just, and wrong not her who saved thy mother’s life.”

Lewis struggled for a moment with his passions ; but, though he could conceive, he had not mental strength to realize their subjection, and rending his mantle from the grasp of Sir Aymer, he exclaimed, “ No, I cannot ---by Heaven, I cannot resign her !” and

rushed away.----“Courage. yet,” cried Sir Aymer: “if she is between heaven and earth, she shall be found; and if found, restored.”

Meanwhile Genevieve had been conveyed by her conductors to a detached and secluded apartment in the lodgings occupied by the Prince and his immediate attendants, in the town. Though Lewis resolved to employ only persuasion with his prisoner, he could not carry his generosity farther; but determined, at every risk, to keep her concealed from Sir Amirald. In the meanwhile he availed himself of every opportunity, which the stormy debates of the Crusaders allowed him, to visit her,---employing all the eloquence of passion and of power, and in violent importunity even prostrating himself before her; her beauty, purity, and unprotected helplessness, alternately urging and disarming him. These visits were the only interruption to her solitude.

It was on the fourth evening of her confinement that at a late hour the door

of her apartment was burst open, and Prince Lewis rushed in; his visage inflamed, and his hair and robes deranged, as if from the consequences of a personal struggle. He gazed on her, and then striking his forehead with an agonizing expression of self-reproach, he exclaimed: "Come with me this moment, maiden---if, indeed, a moment yet be left thee!"---"And whither must I now go?" said Genevieve, as she rose and stood trembling before him.---"Stay not to ask---stay not to speak," he cried; "a moment's delay may cost thy life!"---"My life!" she said, with a faint smile---"is that all? Then, Sir knight, I quit not this spot:" but her heart recoiling as she spoke, "And am I, indeed, to perish, and so soon?" she said: "and cannot even Sir Amirald save me?"

"Sir Amirald save thee---thee whom a son of France is unable to rescue even for an hour!" exclaimed Lewis. "Frantic and obstinate girl, hear and believe thy peril and *my* shame:---I was this night at a feast held by the

Bishop of Toulouse; a feast of reconciliation he termed it—aught but that was in his fiendish thoughts. As we sat, tidings came that some of the most potent lords in Languedoc were taking arms in defence of their vassals, amongst whom the cursed heresy of thy people rages. At the word, every sword sprang from its sheath, every eye was fixed on me, every tongue hailed me champion of the Church—the title for which I would have forfeited life—for which I had well nigh lost it to De Montfort. But even De Montfort ceded his claim; the bishop employed his only to strengthen mine. I believed him all sincere; but the subtle and bloody prelate had been dealing deeply with the Crusaders. He hates thee deadly, maiden, I know not wherefore: he had sworn them to a man: I shame to tell thee, their absurd and savage superstition required that I should yield thee up to perish ere a knight would stand by my banner: they assailed, they implored, they beset me, inflamed as I was with wine, intoxicated with power, and I”——

“Yielded,” said Genevieve, fixing on him her mild dark eyes. “Alas! Sir knight; and to honour, to humanity, thou wouldst not yield me, and to the first call of mad and selfish ambition I am doomed to be the sacrifice!”—

“No, by Heaven, maiden,” cried Lewis; “scarce had the mad words passed my lips when I retracted them: through menace, through injury, through indignity that I blush to have survived, I burst from their accursed feast. Two of the faithfulest of my train still guard the postern, and will make good the passage with their lives, while I bear thee to some safer retreat, where their ruthless and brutal rage shall be matter of scorn to us. Maiden,” he cried, watching her moveless features, fixed in horror at the thought---“maiden, for thee a son of France has forgotten his rank, his rights, himself; and dost thou dare to hesitate who hast nothing to risk? But thou shalt not be allowed the choice.”—“Prince,” said Genevieve, retreating as he approached her,---“prince, thou gavest thine oath but yes-

terday, in mercy to my terrors, that I should suffer no farther violence at thy hands: I claim that oath now; and as thou hast pledged thine immortal soul, and valuest the pledge, redeem it, and leave me to die.”—“And thou, so young, so fair, so gentle,” said Lewis, gazing on her with mingled feelings of admiration and agony,---“canst thou brave death---such death as they may prepare for thee?”---“It will be but a few moments of brief torture,” said Genevieve hurriedly; “and then---but a few moments indeed,” she cried---“I hear them approaching:” and already a tumultuous band was heard surrounding the apartment which we have described as detached, and to which Prince Lewis’s flight had pointed their way. Some of them bore torches, and the voice of Sir Ambrose was heard among them fiercely exclaiming, “Let us burn the heretic harlot with fire,” as with unappeasable rancour against Genevieve he led the intoxicated party on; while some began to hurl their torches towards the roof, too plainly indicating their horrible purpose. “Dogs, devils

as they are," cried Prince Lewis in fury, "they dare not do such outrage!"—and he tore open the casement : the flashes of light came thicker and brighter through it.—“ Oh ! save me, save me ! ” cried Genevieve with an involuntary shriek of horror at the prospect of her fearful doom. “ But it must be,” she said, the heart’s dew of agony bursting from every pore of her pale brow—“ but it must be ! Away, for God’s sake, away, lest thou too share my dreadful death ! ”—“ Saints and angels ! and canst thou reject life—love—a prince’s love, to embrace a fate so horrible ? The postern is guarded by our friends : this moment I will bear thee through it ; but I cannot alone encounter those hounds of hell.”—“ And *I must*,” said Genevieve with a ghastly smile : “ it will be but a few moments,—a brief agony—better, far better than a life of shame. Away, Prince Lewis, save thy royal life ; and if he thou callest Amirald should name me hereafter, tell him I perished unstained and true.”—“ Thou shalt not perish,” cried Lewis with his most tremendous oath, “ *Par le sang*

des Rois; in thine own despite I will save thee.”
---“ Amid those cruel men,” cried Genevieve, springing from him, “ would I rather fling this frail body, than into arms like thine. I shudder at mine horrible death; but I shudder more at thee.”---“ They must have the power as well as the malignity of the great fiend, if they dare to oppose me,” cried Lewis rushing from the apartment; and wrapping his mantle round his left arm, he flung himself among the assailants. Genevieve looked from the casement: she saw him stagger, sink in the heat and struggle, and borne off insensible.

The chamber was constructed of wood: the roof was already in a blaze, and the burning fragments of the timber were dropping around her. She retreated from them as they fell; but the floor began also to burn, and the shouts or rather yells of her persecutors deepened in her ears. She retreated to the centre of the chamber, but the heat there was suffocating. She sank on the floor; but started from it, as it scorched her. “ Oh !” she

cried, as the volumes of smoke rolled towards her---“ Oh that they might choke me at once, that this horrid agony might be over ! Oh, what those suffer who perish in flames ! ” she cried, as she attempted to fly from place to place, while the flames gathered strength : but every where the burning touch, the suffocating smoke repelled her. Her senses gave way : the last distinct impression she retained was that of sinking into a profound sleep, from which the voice of Amiral d tried in vain to arouse her.

CHAPTER VI.

Come round me, my thousands !

OSSIAN.

THE report which had reached the Crusaders at the feast held by the Bishop of Toulouse, was true. Some of the most powerful lords in Languedoc, among whom were foremost the Counts de Foix and de Comminges, had risen in aid of the Albigeois, and threatened to oppose a formidable barrier to the progress of the Crusaders. Those two lords had been the intimate friends of the Count of Toulouse : they had even had the courage to accompany him to Rome, and advocate his cause before the Pope ; but latterly revolted by his imbecile and fluctuating character, incensed by the spoliation of their territories and the slaughter of their vassals, and in fact jealous and trembling for

their own diminished wealth and power ; after dispatching respectful embassies to the Pope, to justify the measures they declared themselves compelled to, they bade their banners fly, and summoned the Albigeois to seek protection beneath them. The first measure they adopted was to seize on some city, which they proposed to fortify, and collecting their troops there, to offer shelter to all the Albigeois who were disposed to avail themselves of it ; thus putting an end to the desultory and uneventful warfare which had been hitherto carried on, and assuming a position alike cognizable by friends and enemies. Their standards were soon followed by a numerous band of men-at-arms, and by what the historian terms, “ *une foule incroyable*” of the Albigeois, who, abandoned by Count Raymond, sought where they could for safety and for life.

These measures were concerted and acted on with such expedition, that the intelligence reached the Crusaders only at the moment of its execution. The place they had fixed on

was the worst they could select—the city of Tarascon. It was in the neighbourhood of Beaucaire, from which the Bishop of Toulouse could always detach a considerable force against it: it was also commanded by a fortified castle beyond the walls of the town; an edifice spacious enough to contain a host, and strong enough itself to stand a siege the fiercest that that age could lay. The town had been among the first to yield to De Montfort when he overran the territories of the Count of Toulouse in his first rapid career of conquest, and was now held for the Crusaders by Lambert de Limons, a brave and experienced warrior; but his garrison was feeble, the fortifications of the town were equally so, and the houses wholly undefended; for at that period the privilege of having their houses fortified belonged exclusively to the bourgeois of Toulouse and Avignon—a privilege for which they had often paid sufficiently dear. This circumstance, perhaps, determined the inauspicious choice of the leaders of this new army, believing that

Tarascon would be an easy prey ; but in their march thither they were fated to encounter circumstances still more inauspicious. They were themselves rigid Catholics—so were the men-at-arms they led. The wandering bands of the Albigeois collecting from every quarter, and especially from Toulouse, from which the Count's vacillating creed had once more expelled them, were tenacious of the new faith, and fierce and even bloody contest arose on their progress between the protectors and the protected. The leaders could hardly venture to interfere to check this ; and when they did, their interference was repelled by a reference to their mutual creed on the part of their followers.---“ Dogs of heretics ! ” they cried, “ we well deserve such reproach for aiding their cause. ” And this was followed not only by increasingly injurious treatment of the Albigeois, but by mutinous murmurs against their leaders. Meanwhile this unhappy people, no less persecuted than persecuting, were perpetually at war among themselves ; for every division

and subdivision of opinion was now developed among the multitudes that assembled in every direction,—emigrants from Beaucaire, Toulouse, Nismes, and every place supposed to be infected with heresy; and in the intervals of abuse that they plentifully received from the troops of the Counts de Foix and de Comminges, they employed themselves in as liberally bestowing it on each other; and the terms Petro-brusiens, Henriciens, Catharins, and Patarins, never ceased among the unhappy and distracted multitude; every man upbraiding his comrade and fellow-sufferer, and then making common cause against the catholic troops, who assailed them in turn, and never failed to pay the interest of their debt of sharp words with heavy blows, till the whole band presented the appearance of a mutinous, disarrayed and disorganized multitude, fiercely hating and assaulting each other, accordingly as words or blows might predominate.

The winter had expired, and an early and favourable spring had commenced, when this

party, of whose march intelligence, as we have told, had reached Toulouse, was approaching the city of Tarascon ; and their leaders, anticipating a temporary cessation of their differences on their arrival at this seat of mutual shelter and defence, urged on their progress with the utmost haste. On their approach, however, to Tarascon, they were struck by the tranquil, defenceless appearance of the city, and halted for a short consultation. They knew the well-proved courage and military skill of Lambert de Limons, who held the town for the Crusaders, and paused to consider whether some danger was not to be dreaded from this singular tranquillity. Their debates were broken in upon by the clamours of the men-at-arms, who were anxious for plunder, and the Albigeois, who were still more anxious for food, of which their military companions had appropriated so large a proportion during their march, that their situation resembled more that of men besieged by enemies than protected by friends. The leaders consented to the demand, rather

than petition, of their tumultuous army ; and dispatched a band of fifty archers, flanked by as many men-at-arms—all of them expert, chosen men—to reconnoitre the approaches of the town. They returned in safety, but their report was sufficiently mysterious and unsatisfactory ; and when the Counts de Foix and de Comminges put their forces in motion, and approached the town, singular as it was, they found it verified. Not a banner waved on the walls---not a warder stood on tower or bartizan---not a horn was blown from the gates---the town had no moat, save on one side, and the gates lay open in silent and portentous invitation.

All that day the army lay before the walls, but it seemed as a city of the dead. As evening fell, the impetuosity of the troops would no longer be restrained : the leaders yielded to it, and the whole army burst into the city, followed fast by the Albigeois. Streets, houses, churches, square, and citadel, were all empty ; nor man nor beast was to be found wherever they

might turn. The earth returned nothing but the sound of their own steps---the air nothing but the echo of their own voices. There was now no restraining the troops; they wandered, pillaged, ravaged, and revelled through every street in Tarascon; and ample booty was there to excite and satiate their cupidity. Rich garments, household stuff and plate, appeared displayed in ostentatious profusion; and with these the men-at-arms hasted to equip themselves, appearing in their new and multifarious array something like Trinculo and Stephano in their stolen robes, while the spirit which laid the glittering bait was waiting to pursue and punish them for the trespass. The half-famished Albigeois betook themselves to the provisions that they found spread with equal and mysterious plenty in the empty houses; and ere night fell, all had feasted on the viands, and arrayed themselves in the garments they found in the deserted city.

Meanwhile the Counts de Foix and Comminges had drawn their immediate band of

knights and gentlemen into the citadel ; and still not wholly unsuspicious of some treachery, they searched every apartment and passage, till at length they conceived themselves sufficiently safe ; and, finding rich viands and costly wines in the citadel, they sat down to banquet at their leisure. Their spirits rose as they feasted and drank ; they pledged each other deeply ; and, in pride of their strange and sudden achievement of the possession of the town of Tarascon, were clasping each other's hands at every pledge, when a trumpet was blown on the sudden, and an armed knight rushed in almost along with the sound. The Count de Foix and his companion started up at the intrusion, believing it to be some knight of their train. The stranger raised his visor, and disclosed a face which both of them remembered to have beheld, but neither could clearly recollect where.

“ I am to crave your pardon, lords,” said the youthful knight, “ for mine intrusion ; and next, to announce tidings of

high concernment!"—"Thy tidings should indeed be of importance to justify such intrusion. Speak, then!" said De Foix, standing with his hand on his dagger as he spoke.—"Thine employers have sent but a weak instrument to sound their challenge," said Comminges.—"Then hear it to-morrow from the trumpets of the Crusaders," said the youth, "who ere dawn will invest your towers! Such are my tidings; brook them how ye list."

De Foix and De Comminges started to their feet. "These be stirring tidings indeed!" exclaimed the former. "And where gottest thou them? and what be thy credentials—thy pledge?"—"My life!" said the youth with proud confidence: "I have placed that in your hands; and as ye find me to have spoken the truth, so deal with me. The army of the Crusaders is on its march; they will be beneath your walls to-morrow; and hang me from the highest turret of your citadel, if by dawn ye find not my tidings, which I have risked life to bear,

true!"----"And who art thou that bearest such tidings? and who commissioned thee to bear them?" said De Foix.----"Ay, ask him that!" said De Comminges.----"My lords," said the young knight, "I must say that the reception I have met with is lacking, not only in noble courtesy, but in the wisdom I might seek in chiefs like you. I bear you tidings of high import---I pledge my life on their truth---and ye seek my name and title? If that be warrantage, I tell ye, peers of France, that I have right to the *cri d'armes*,* being a knight banneret, knighted by your liege sovereign and mine, King Philip, on the field of battle."

De Foix and De Comminges whispered together, and looked at him as they whispered. "Wast thou not one of that godless band," said De Foix, "who wore the cross on their breast, but trampled it under their feet?"---"I have transferred it from my breast to my heart," said Amirald; "and there I trust it will remain."

* "Une autre distinction des *bannerets* étoit d'avoir *cry d'armes*." Velly, vol. iv.

“And what motive hast thou for such change?” said De Foix suspectingly. “We rise in aid of our despoiled vassals, our ravaged territories; but thou, a landless, birthless youth, to all seeming---what motive hath urged thee to such enterprise?”---“My lords,” said the youth blushing, his youthful grace and modest mien making strong contrast with the half-recumbent posture, scowling brow, and flushed but stern visage of the querist, “my lords, is this noble?---is it generous to press on a stranger’s private thoughts? Believe it, that the motive must have been powerful that could produce such change: I will say no more.”

“If thine intelligence be true,” said De Foix, “thou canst tell us how the Crusaders have marshalled their array?”---“De Montfort,” replied Amirald, “hath marshalled them in three bands, in honour of the Holy Trinity: the Dauphin leads the centre, the Bishop of Toulouse the left wing, and De Montfort himself the right.” De Foix and his companions interchanged looks, as if their

suspicious began to be removed. “But, lords, my tidings are not yet told: a powerful ally, as well as a fierce enemy, is in the field---Count Raymond of Toulouse is marching hither.’---“Sir stranger knight,” said De Comminges, “thou taskest our credulity too far. Know we not that Raymond of Toulouse is paying his devotions before the doors of every church in his territories---because he dares not enter them? and causing prayers to be said for his reconciliation with the holy father?”---“And know ye not also the holy father’s answer to his last embassy: “*Mon fils, écoutez-moi, aimez Dieu sur tout chose, ne prenez jamais les biens d’autrui; mais defendez le votre, si quelqu’un veut vous l’enlever;*”* and that, on the faith of that message, Count Raymond is already at the head of a potent army, and making towards Tarascon with his utmost speed?”---“This seems like truth,” said De Foix.---“Seems,” cried Amiral. “Now, by Heaven, lords, I will

* These words were addressed by Pope Honorius, I believe, to the son of Count Raymond.

no longer brook these wrongs : trust me, or slay me on the spot !”

De Foix was about to return a fierce answer, and De Comminges to interpose, when a loud tumult was heard at the entrance, and some of De Foix’s attendants rushed in, dragging, or rather carrying among them the ghastly figure of a man apparently wasted by disease, but who neither offered resistance, nor attempted supplication. “ My lord,” they cried, in answer to the questions eagerly hurried on them, “ we found this fellow concealed in a private passage near this chamber ; we have brought him hither, and perchance he can tell the cause of this city’s strange abandonment, and why, of the thousands that swarmed here but two days past, he alone was found, and found concealed.”---“ Speak, fellow, for thy life !” said De Foix, turning fiercely on the ghastly wretch. ---“ My life !---not for that,” said the prisoner, with an energy of voice and manner singularly contrasted with the squalid debility of his appearance : “ but I *will* speak, and ye

shall find my words are true as the words of the dying are ever. Lambert de Limons, the governor of the town, withdrew his garrison from these walls on the report of your approach, and he hath thrown himself into the castle of Tarascon, which he purposes to hold for the Crusaders, whose arrival he expects by to-morrow's dawn."—"This confirms the stranger knight's report," said De Comminges.—"It needed not *such* confirmation," said Amirald with some disdain.—"And the inhabitants of the town?" said De Foix.—"They dispersed on the garrison's being withdrawn."—"And wherefore didst thou tarry here alone?"—"I was unable to follow them; and if I were, it was my wish to stay: my reasons you will know ere long," replied the prisoner, with an expression somewhat sinister.—"Hast thou aught else to disclose?" said De Foix.—"Tidings that should be welcome to you, noble lords," said the man with a portentous smile: "and yet methinks you will scarce have heart to welcome them when they are fulfilled."—

“Tell them plainly,” said De Foix; “and forbear, if thou canst, that leer that suits so ill the features of a dying wretch like thee.”—“Men say,” answered the prisoner, “that Raymond of Toulouse is marching hither; and that the incarnate fiend, in form of a knight in sable armour, fights by his side. However that be, Lambert de Limons thought better, with his small garrison, to maintain the castle than the town, whose defences were destroyed when Simon de Montfort won it from the Count of Toulouse.”—“Sir stranger knight,” said De Foix eagerly, “we cry you mercy for our unseasonable mistrust, and gladly accept the proffered aid of your arms and counsel.”

Amirald took the hand of the Count, who accompanied his words with the suitable action, and grasped it with an energy that made him feel the pledge was given for life and death. His finely modulated temper, like a piece composed by some skilful musician, admitted a passing discord for a moment, only to swell and enrich the succeeding harmony.

“Now, my lords,” he said, “shall we not set forth by to-morrow’s dawn? A *sortie* from these towers would at least check the Crusaders; and if we succeeded in turning their flanks, perchance by that time the army of Raymond of Toulouse may arrive, and thus they will be enclosed between two fires. A *sortie*, noble lords, by the dawn, and I will yield to the first lance levelled against me, an’ we do not win the day against De Montfort and his triple host, were they trebled again.”—“Sir stranger knight, thou sayest well,” answered De Foix; “but our men-at-arms are now scattered through the town in quest of pillage. We will summon them back on the instant: they have, I warrant me, scarce left a meal untasted or a garment untried in the town. They must be recalled to their standards within the hour, and by dawn we charge from these walls.”—“Is it true,” said the prisoner, “that your troops have partaken of the food, and clothed themselves with the garments they found within these walls?” No one heeded him; while the Count de Foix

loudly issued his orders for recalling the men-at-arms from their dispersion through the town. The prisoner then repeated his demand in a hollow voice, but with an expression of eagerness indescribable. “And dost thou ask, fellow,” said De Foix, issuing orders,—“dost thou ask whether men-at-arms will seize on the spoil of a deserted town ; or whether the starved Albigeois will not snatch a meal where he can find it ?”—As he spoke, his back was to the prisoner, but he suddenly turned on hearing a wild and fierce shriek of exultation : —“Then are they death-doomed every man, did each possess the strength of an hundred giants ! The town was visited by the plague ; Lambert de Limons withdrew his garrison in terror ; and the infected and unprotected inhabitants wandered where they might : but they left behind them pledges of their good-will towards their expected guests. Every morsel that ye have tasted is death—every garment that ye have but touched is deadly as mortal poison. Now rejoice at the speedy succour of Count Ray-

mond. Ha, ha ! he will be greeted by your livid corpses : or by your spirits parting in torture : and I --- I remained alone to tell the enemies of God their fate, and to die." The breathless silence that followed this terrible communication was itself as terrible. It did not, however, continue long. "Die, then ! accursed fiend," cried De Foix with an ungovernable impulse of fury and horror : and he plunged his dagger to the hilt in the body of the prisoner, who fell without a groan. He fell on his face ; but in a few moments, by convulsive exertions, he turned himself on his back as he lay, and tearing open his garment, pointed to the livid spots on his breast, and, glaring at his murderer with an unutterable smile, expired.

Amirald, who like the rest had stood dumb and stupified with horror, now felt a sting of agonizing consciousness thrill through frame and soul, and striking his forehead, and uttering with a sob of despair the single word "Genevieve," he rushed from the apartment. On his reaching the citadel that disastrous

night, he had placed her under the care of his two 'squires (to which his retinue was now diminished) in the antechamber, while he passed on to impart his tidings, and offer his aid to the leaders. There he now found her seated, in a retired nook, with her veil folded round her, silently shrinking from the rude gaze of the armed attendants of the counts, as they hastily traversed the chamber. He stood some moments in irresolute agony; but when, at length beholding her young protector again, she rose, and with a sweet and timid confidence extended her arms towards him, he thought his heart would burst: he rushed towards her, and in a brief and shuddering whisper communicated the terrible intelligence of their danger.

Genevieve for a moment trembled, and recoiled in natural horror; but in the next she said, in a voice tremulous, indeed, but which announced invincible resolution, "Then I will seek my poor old father, and we will perish together." It was in vain that Amirald, with all the agony of a lover, expostulated,

implored, and finally menaced to detain her. "Thou wilt not use force," she said with resolute mildness; "and to naught but force will I yield in this thing. Noble knight, gentle friend," she added, "withstand me not; I will not be counselled."

Amirald adjured her by her only chance for safety, to remain in the citadel, as she was yet free from infection, having neither tasted the food nor touched the raiment since her arrival.

As he pleaded, some of the more respectable of the Albigeois came to solicit the protection of the Counts against the tyranny and rapacity of the men-at-arms, who were taking from them their provisions, and otherwise abusing and plundering them. As these men struggled through the tumultuous and insulting opposition of the men-at-arms who crowded the apartment, a voice was heard exclaiming, "Smite me not, I pray thee! I am old and blind, and lack a guide to aid me." Genevieve sprang forward at the sound, and in a moment locked her arms round the neck of the aged Pierre, and sobbed

in mingled joy and agony on his breast ; while the old man, recognizing her in the same moment, held her to his heart with a sense of pleasure so oppressive and overpowering that it was almost converted into pain. The others who filled the apartment were unfit spectators of such a scene : they gazed incuriously for a time, and then began to utter coarse jests on the meeting, till Amirald forced his way among them, and fiercely repelled the rude circle. But such was the tumult and distraction in the citadel of Tarascon, the tidings of infection spreading fast, that it was only by dint of manual force, seconded by that of his 'squires, that the knight succeeded in securing a small and remote chamber in the citadel for Genevieve and the pastor ; where he left his attendants to protect them, and hastened back to take part in the troubled and distracted councils of the Counts de Foix and de Comminges during the short remainder of that dreary night.

Meanwhile the pastor and his daughter

sat in their still, remote chamber in a state of pure delight, which not even the sense of near and mortal danger could disturb. The thought made their meeting solemn, but not sad. “And why dost thou quit my side, Genevieve?” said the old man, extending his arms towards her.—“It was to bring the lamp nearer my father.”—“But I can feel thee without it.”—“But I cannot see you, my father, in this dusky chamber filled with arms. Alas ! how you are changed, my father !”—“Regard it not, my child, but haste to tell me all that hath befallen thee, and how thou hast been restored to me ; for my heart forebodes that, surrounded as we are by pestilence and war, these are the last and only moments in which it will be allowed me to listen to thy voice, and to feel thy hands in mine.”

Genevieve began her tale, but often paused, palliated, and omitted when the theme was her own danger. But it was observable even to Pierre, that when the name of Sir Amirald mingled in her story, her voice became free.

her language fluent and unhesitating, and her narrative most minute and circumstantial. She told of her deliverance from the flames by *him*, who, at the risk of his life, had borne her through them ; and then, almost unaided, charged on her persecutors with one arm, while he sustained his senseless burthen in the other. In her narrative she could not but contrast the daring courage and faithful love of Amiral with the selfish and violent passion of the Dauphin, who had persecuted her while in his power, and abandoned her to her horrible fate when he found his interest with the Crusaders was compromised by her presence. “ But, oh ! my father, hadst thou seen him—his noble daring, his gentle courage ! It would be worth a miracle to restore thy sight, were it but to view that form so lovely and noble.” —“ But, my child,” said the old man, “ it was of thee I wished to hear : what is the comely favour of that youth to me ? Go on, my daughter : he guided thee to Toulouse (as thou saidst was thy intendment) in safety and honour ? ” —“ Alas ! yes, my father : but when I arrived

there, all things were changed. Our kinswoman Merab, with whom I hoped to sojourn, had obeyed the new injunctions of Count Raymond, and professed the ancient faith: the count himself assisted at mass, and enjoined it on all his subjects during his negotiation with the Pope. Our kinswoman was a widow with many children: she gazed for a space on the gems I offered her to shelter me; but then she looked at her children, and averting her head that she might not see me, pointed to the open door. I was then a wanderer in the streets of Toulouse: and oh! how I rejoiced to find that the most powerful feeling of my persecutors was their avarice! But my ransom soon left me poor; for when Sir Amirald bore me from that burning chamber, I left in a cabinet, where I had hid them, the most costly jewels of the queen's gift. It was darkling when I sheltered me within the shadow of a church where they were singing mass or vespers. Soon a glare of torches flashed on me where I lay concealed, and I saw the powerful preacher,

the mighty warrior Mattathias, borne from judgment to the prison, there to abide his doom ; for Count Raymond had resolved to sacrifice to the Pope's demands the chief among his once highly-favoured Albigeois. The torches, held by some ghastly wretches, blazed in the front of the procession, and then came Mattathias. He was to be consigned to prison for two days ; and if within that period he did not submit to the ancient faith, he was to be burnt with fire. As he passed me, his stern and ghastly features spoke aught but faith or hope : they had that fixed expression that spoke not spiritual, but physical power ; not the zeal of the martyr, but the strength of the man. "I always judged him what thou hast spoken him," said Pierre : "and moreover he was the cause of thy banishment from the congregation. He rent the last green leaf from the sapless trunk—he quenched the light of the blind. I have tried to forgive him, and I have sometimes thought I had done so ; but I dared not search my heart. Yet fear not

thou, my child ; there are none now to oppose return. Boanerges is now a mighty warrior clad in mail : and Amand ——” “ Oh, what of him ?” said Genevieve fearfully.—“ Didst thou love him, my child, that thou speakest with such earnestness ?”—“ Alas ! no, my father ; but we sometimes dread more to hear the fate of those who hated, than of those who have loved us.”—“ He wandered about among us, after thy departure, heavy and silent : a bad and restless spirit seemed to be at work within him. On our way hither, he disappeared ; and no one knows what hath befallen him—no one, methinks, inquired. But tell me, my child, the end of the hard-hearted and hard-fated Mattathias.”—“ Oh, my father, it was fearful. I sought him in his prison, near his last moments, and then the faith for which he had been so zealous failed ! He doubted that he had ever believed. The soul tried to drop her anchor, but found no bottom ; and went on drifting her dim and stormy way, almost a wreck. He called on me to join him in prayer and hymns. I sang and

prayed, but he said there was no meaning in the sounds : and then to see his fixed ghastly eyes, the cold drops on his forehead, and his strong frame heaving with its throes, like a mountain moved by an earthquake ! His pride upheld him, and he died the death of a martyr, but without a martyr's faith or hope. To my dying hour never can I forget his." Pierre shuddered at the awful picture. "But my fears were soon awakened for myself. My visits to the prison were watched ; there was no safety then in Toulouse for those of our faith ; and again I owed my deliverance to the care and valour of Sir Amiral. But when I had escaped from the city, and my protector asked where I was about to direct my flight, I looked around me and on him in mute and utter helplessness, for I knew not that spot on earth where I might turn my steps in safety. At length I bethought me of the report that the Albigeois were betaking themselves to this city of Tarascon ; and I said that I would repair hither, that I might share the lot of my

people; and, if they perished, perish with them. As I spoke, his countenance seemed suddenly to glow with a light from Heaven. ‘Maiden,’ he said, ‘the faith that can prompt and sustain a woman in trials like thine, cannot be heresy, cannot be error. I will be thy companion, thy protector, thy friend, the partaker of thy faith, and the champion of thy cause: thy people shall be my people; and thy God my God.’”---Pierre clasped his hands in ecstasy, and blessed her. “As we journeyed hither,” continued Genevieve, “I endeavoured humbly, as became an unlettered maiden, to explain to him those glorious truths that form the substance of our purer creed; and was it not wondrous, my father, that from lips like mine he would hear those truths which perchance he would have rejected, if expounded to him by the most learned of our teachers?”---Pierre smiled in silence; for though he set a value sufficiently high on his own controversial powers, he could not help internally admitting that, to a handsome and enamoured youth, the lips of

female beauty were capable of making things intelligible which would be heard with indifference from the voice of masculine orthodoxy. Zealous, however, for every dogma of his faith, he inquired into the course of argument she had adopted with her catechumens, in hope of discovering that the impression it had made was not, as might be expected, partial, temporary, and superficial. ---“I know not how it was,” said Genevieve in her simplicity: “I spoke but now and then, not long or continuously; and menought nature, and the objects that presented themselves as we journeyed, seemed to take a kindly and aidful part with me. Once, I remember, when I saw him smile, (though he suppressed his smile,) at the thought that an unskilled and unlettered peasant should handle such high themes, I ventured to demand of him whether, when lonely and benighted, he had not often been cheered by the light glancing from the casement of the cottager; a light denied by the barred though lofty windows of a castled

hold. And once more, as we passed near a mountain-torrent, that after its stormy fall wound quietly through the valley, he spoke with scorn of our humble and obscure estate, and proudly and painfully contrasted it with that lofty course to which his early hopes had aspired :---I told him, that men gazed on the cataract as it thundered from the cliff, but drank of its waters only when they rested on the plain.”

---“ It is well, my child,” said Pierre : “ but tell me, mine own Genevieve, didst thou search thine heart, and was it clear in this matter ? Thou hast painted to me the youth’s favour as goodly beyond that of the sons of men ; and of a truth his bearing towards thee might have made even deformity gracious in thy sight. But did no illusion of earthly and profane passion mingle with thy hope and thy toil for his conversion ? Didst thou seek to win him to thy faith, or to win him to thyself ? ” ---“ Not now,” said Genevieve hastily, while a slight suffusion of womanly pride and shame tinged her cheek,

and she blushed as though her father could have beheld her. "I might have had such a thought---such a dream: but, alas! my father, though in the first impulse of his noble heart he sacrificed all for me, I see every hour he repents the sacrifice; and though he would hide it from me, methinks I could almost better bear his reproaches than his silence. Never did we pass a lordly castle, but he gave a sigh to the recollection of the martial sport of the tourney; its noble guerdon, dealt by proud barons and high-descended dames. Never did we pass a church, but he sighed for the pomp of the ancient faith, where kneeling nobles received the benison of the lordly and mitred prelates; where the feet trod on the dust of princes, and the armed effigies on their tombs made the very marble eloquent of the fame of chivalry. Thus would he speak, and I wept. He saw it, and forbore to speak; and I wept the more."---
"Enough, my child," said Pierre: "I grieve that I probed the wound, whose cure, I see, will soon be wrought by another hand. The

young knight's neglect will soon dissolve the fairy pile in which thou, poor dreamer, didst empalace thyself."---"It matters not," said Genevieve with a kind of heroic melancholy, hastily drying her eyes---"it matters not; he bears a good sword to the cause of the Albigeois, and a true heart to their faith. For me, my wanderings are at a close: hither have I come, and come at length to die."---"Not so, my daughter," said Pierre; "for since I have met thee, methinks the love of life hath rekindled even within me."---"But I have no wish for life," said Genevieve, all her resolution giving way before the keen anguish his last words had excited. "Oh, my father, I feel and know it is easier to meet death in flames and agony, than to encounter him under the withering aspect of a broken and hopeless heart."---"Genevieve," said the old man solemnly; and he seized the moment of strong emotion, and tried powerfully and successfully to lead her mind back to the sole topic in which his own centered and terminated ever; and both found the change for

the better, and themselves bettered by the change.

The themes on which they spoke gradually raised them above the sense of mortal suffering and of mortal fear. They spoke of grief, but they no longer spoke with tears. The daylight broke on their sad and holy conference : and their exhausted frames alike requiring rest, the pastor slumbered where he sat; and Genevieve, as she was wont in her early days, sat on the ground, and resting her head on the pastor's knees, slept, resolved not to dream of Amirald.

CHAPTER VII.

The combat deepens. On, ye brave
Who rush to glory, or the grave !
Wave, Munich ! all thy banners wave,
And charge with all thy chivalry !

CAMPBELL.

THE morning broke on the city of Tarascon, and found it in tumult and consternation. The disunion between the ill-organised men-at-arms, and the heretics, whom they reluctantly protected, (but very willingly plundered,) was increased by the report of the pestilence being in the town, and all was distraction, mutiny, and pillage.

De Comminges inclosed himself in the citadel, and refused to hold communion even by letter with De Foix or his retainers, pretending dread of the pestilence ; while his

men were pillaging through the town, giving themselves up to all the desperation of sailors in a wreck, who break open lockers, dress themselves in the officers' clothes, and practise every kind of mad extravagance on the approach of their dreadful and inevitable doom. Sickening at all he saw, and hopeless in heart of all that might succeed, Sir Amirald nevertheless rode forth at dawn to reconnoitre the advance of the enemy. As he rode through the streets to the gate of Tarascon, the sounds of distant violence and uproar struck on his ear at every moment, where the fierce followers of the counts were committing acts of the wildest outrage and hostility. As he reached the gate, a kerchief was waved to him from a casement. Believing it to be a signal of distress, he reined in his steed, and looked upward; and for a moment he saw the heavenly face of Genevieve, as, once more waving her kerchief, she retired from the casement. On the door were inscribed the terrible characters, *Domine, miserere nobis*,

and Amirald felt with agony unutterable how and where she was employed. For a moment his courage failed: he tried to rouse himself, but in vain; then at the image of this humble solitary female, at risk of life engaged in duty that she knew to be mortal, a gush of magnanimity overflowed his heart; and while (for a moment) he wept like woman, he felt more than man. "I have seen that heavenly face for the last time," he said with emotion, setting spurs to his steed: he dashed a tear away, and rode up the hill that neighboured the walls of Tarascon, to observe the approach of the enemy. It was not yet day, but something like a heavy cloud lay on the hills; and Sir Amirald, by the increasing light, could soon descry a vast body of troops in motion. He rode back to the city on the instant, and sought De Foix first, as De Comminges was, he deemed, inaccessible. But close beside the gates he found both the counts at the head of their array, and both at deadly feud. "This is the issue of thy

mad counsel," cried Comminges: "here are we hemmed in between a foe without the walls, and a pestilence within."—"And where be thy men-at-arms to meet the peril?" replied De Foix.—"They are pillaging through the town. This is thy *foi Poictevin*."*—"Rude lord, say that again, and my men-at-arms shall charge against thine!"—"At thy peril!" shouted the other; while he called to his banner-man, "Turn thy standard! we march back to the city of Tarascon."—"In Heaven's name, lords," cried Amirald, riding up, "suspend your feud. The enemy hangs like a thunder-cloud on your hills; and here ye stand rending each other like two blood-hounds, instead of rushing together at the prey. Look yonder, and see if I speak true!" De Foix and De Comminges turned their bloodshot and angry eyes from each other to the view of the advancing enemy, who were now indeed seen gathering on the hills like a storm.

* A term then equivalent to *Punica fides*.

They gazed for a moment on the formidable sight with a kind of stupor (which was, however, wholly unmingled with fear); and then, slowly drawing their suspended breath, and loosing hold of the daggers, which they held half-drawn, they turned on each other looks of mutual shame for their paltry and disgraceful broil.

Sir Amiralcl took advantage of this silent advance to reconciliation, and again pointed out the approach of the force, that excited, while it *almost* awed him, in language not unlike that of a more powerful poet than ever knight troubadour was—

“ Their gilt coats shew like dragons’ scales—

Their march like a rough tumbling storm.” *

Their appearance was indeed terrific to all but eyes accustomed to look on war.

The centre of the Crusaders was led by Prince Lewis in person, and over his head was displayed the oriflamme of France, grasped by the same bold hand that had upheld it in the battle of Bovines; for at this period it was

* Beaumont and Fletcher.

customary to crown the heir of France in his father's lifetime (to insure the succession); and the Dauphin therefore marched to battle in all the insignia of anticipated royalty.

But the array of Prince Lewis was all loose and disorderly : a number of light females travelled in the midst of his van ; and the prince was so attentive to their accommodation, that he detached a large body of his troops to the rear, to secure their safety ; while he was for ever quitting his post to hold talk with the bonnibelles, amid whom his fool danced, laughed, rang his bells, and proclaimed himself the chief of the host, inasmuch as he led them who led their leader. This disarray was marked by the keen eye of Sir Amirald, and he hastened to make his advantage of it. The left wing was led by the Bishop of Toulouse, who, though invincibly brave, and profoundly skilful in the tactics of the age, could not be safely entrusted with the command of even a portion of an army ; his ambitious selfishness always leading him to some desperate enterprise, by which he might

himself be distinguished, were it at the loss of ten thousand lives : so that, if in a day of assault he stood alone on some tower that was deemed impregnable, and shouted his war-cry in the voice of victory, he cared not if it pealed over the dead bodies of every follower he had led to slaughter. The position he had taken this day savoured strongly of his character : he led the left wing, which was of course opposed to the right of the city of Tarascon. On that side flowed a branch of the Rhone ; and there the fortifications were neglected, the inhabitants relying on the protection of the river, and the difficulty of approaching the town. Thither the bishop was resolved to urge his forces, and make a desperate attempt, careless what befel the centre of the host, or the right wing (which was led by the Count De Montfort), provided he could first plant the banner of the Crusaders on the battlements of Tarascon. The right wing was still more inauspiciously generalled for the event of the day. De Montfort was at its head : but

he was no longer the redoubtable De Montfort—the resistless champion of the armies of the Church. The wounds he had received, which were principally in his head, had evidently weakened his powers, while they had inflamed his passions. The slightest contradiction maddened him; the most trifling opposition to his will was met by the menace of lance or dagger. He seemed to be under the alternate, or rather mingled influence of delirium and stupor. He issued orders, and revoked them; gave the most absurd commands; seemed conscious of it—but was furious if they were disobeyed. Those under his command knew not what to do, or what he would have them do; and all predicted, by their briefly exchanged looks and whispers, a disastrous event to the battle, if De Montfort, their former Maccabee, led the right wing that day.

On that day, as the historian* informs us, he appeared eminently under the influence of his

* See l'Histoire des Vaudois.

morbid and portentous habits : he had refused to march without first participating in the sacrament, which he termed seeing his Lord and Saviour, as if he had a presentiment of some mortal event ; and when his wish was complied with, he seemed rather more agitated, and his whole conduct and manner were those of one whom our northern neighbours would call *fey*, that is, one hurried on by supernatural impulse to his fate, and not unconscious of the impulse himself. He forced on the right wing rapidly, as if to intercept all communication between the castle of Tarascon (which lay to the left of the city) and the city itself ; thus demonstrating that the post was of some importance by his movement, though the opposed forces could not yet imagine why : while the bishop, intent on *his* purpose, urged on the left wing with still greater rapidity, careless how he weakened the main body, provided he succeeded in seizing on that part of the city which he well knew to be the least defensible. The centre, thus weakened by the elongation, or rather total detachment of its

wings, was in still greater confusion from the surprise into which Prince Lewis and the fiery knights around him were thrown, at seeing a band, whom they had believed cooped up and shrinking within their city, marching forth in fair array to give them battle before its walls. "What," cried the Dauphin to the lords that rode round his standard, "have these wolves, that we have hunted to their den, rushed forth to make prey of us?"—"Ar'n't like your grace," said old Sir Aymer: "those wolves have fangs that will snap the stoutest lances in your host."—"I like not grey-beards to prate of battle," said the Dauphin, scornfully reining back his steed, as if to shun the voice of the unwelcome speaker.—"Nor I," said Sir Aymer on his part,—“nor I, boys, to dream of heading hosts.”—"Peace, Sir Aymer, peace!" cried the standard-bearer, who stood justly high in the favour of the Dauphin: "the cloud that is spreading on yon plain hath somewhat overshadowed Prince Lewis's memory of thy worth."—"And if report says true," answered Sir Aymer, "the cloud that

is gathering on yon hills will turn that shadow into night, ere it be noon." And he pointed with emphatic gesture to the hills, whence a rumour had reached the Crusaders that Raymond of Toulouse was approaching with the embodied fiend among his host; nor did the terror of this wild report, in those ages, at all impair its authenticity or its effect.

"Who is that boy?" said Prince Lewis, proudly turning to his followers, "who rides careering in their van? He is neither herald nor pursuivant by his garb. Go thou," to one of his pages, "and ask if he be warder of yon towers: go tell him we will spare him farther pains to guard them within in an hour." The page (who was an esquire and of noble birth) bowed to his steed's mane, set spurs, and rode. In a short space---while Prince Lewis was laughing, between a youthful knight, who counselled him to ride on and trample on the host, as peasants tread their vintage, and a fair dame, who was patting the proud neck of his war-steed with her white hand,---the page rode back at full

speed, but stood silent. "Speak on," said the Dauphin, "without fear, and without offence."

"My liege," answered the page, "the youth is somewhat insolent; and saith, if you are fatigued in taking his place of warder of the towers of Tarascon, your brows shall be wiped by his hand in such wise that you will never have to undergo such toil again."—

"Lords, gentlemen, noble knights, do you hear such message done to a son of France!" cried the fiery Dauphin. "What say you?"—

"On, on, to the fight!" cried a thousand voices; and twice that number of lances were put in rest, and of swords drawn and flashing round the oriflamme of France. "Send forth the archers and slingers first!" cried Sir Aymer, riding up by the Dauphin's side.—

"Churlish knight, I disdain thee and thy counsel!" exclaimed Prince Lewis, spurring his steed.—"Upon them, lords—upon them, on the instant!" Sir Aymer laid his hand on the Dauphin's rein; the fierce Prince smote it with his battle-axe, and the old knight held it up bleeding: "This will not be the last

blood I will shed in thy cause to-day, Prince Dauphin," he cried, as he spurred on his steed with the rest, holding the reins with his bleeding hand. Sir Amiral marked the confusion of the host, and rode at full speed back to that which was advancing from the city of Tarascon.

The full array of the troops of the Counts de Foix and de Comminges was more formidable than could be apprehended by their adversaries. The intense zeal of the Albigeois had induced them to submit to the military discipline of their Catholic leaders, (however they might detest their creed,) and the stout peasantry, already well skilled in the use of the bow and sling, were placed in front of the host, thus supplying the *matériel* of the van of a feudal army, (which always consisted of slingers and archers,) and feeling their experience more than an equivalent for the military tact which was supposed the exclusive possession of feudal vassals. Moreover, there were amongst them many (and Boanerges at their head) whose strong frames and muscu-

lar power easily bore the weight of arms, and wielded the weapons of the practised militarist; their zeal, eagerness, and perseverance supplying every deficiency of practice and habit. Undeterred by ridicule, unappalled by novelty, and undaunted by danger—rigid, cold, but submissive and watchful, they easily caught the simple tactics of the age, their very creed supplying a motive which was wanted by the mercenary pelerins and the feudal military vassals, and formed a powerful and formidable addition to the troops who had at first despised their inexperience, and undervalued their aid. Besides these, the troops of De Foix and De Comminges were swelled by the accession of the armed bands of many a powerful lord of Languedoc; and De Foix had (apparently to the foe) doubled the number of knights in his army, by causing every knight to bear *two* banners; a *ruse* by which Henry of Winchester, a few years after, won a battle from the King of France.

The battle of the two Counts was thus

arrayed, when Sir Amirald reined up his panting steed by that of De Foix. "My noble lord," said he, "some disorder prevails in the centre of the host. Mark, too," he added, pointing with rapid and emphatic gesture, "how fast the wings are marching away! Seize, seize the moment, noble De Foix, valiant Comminges: grant me but fifty men-at-arms to break their battle, and if I do not scatter their puny defence of archers and slingers, and lay my hand on the Dauphin's rein ere a follower be lost, may there be not one left to bestride my corse!"—"Thou shalt have them," said De Foix; "and if thou break their battle, youth, I will follow with a wedge of men-at-arms that shall split yon oak of the field till it groan and totter."

At a signal, fifty men-at-arms were detached from his train. "Haste, fellows, haste," cried Amirald,—“haste, that we may win advantage of the sun and wind, which the van of Prince Lewis is marching to gain! Haste! such advantage won the battle of

Bovines!" He shouted at the top of his voice; a hundred gathered round him as he rode. "By heaven," cried De Foix, "this boy will teach us generalship! On!" he cried: "St. Denis to aid, though thou fightest against his banner! Spur and speed be the word!"---"Win thy spurs, boy," said Comminges coldly.---"They were won in a bloodier field than ever the Count de Comminges fought in," cried the youth, spurring his steed. "Boy! my deeds shall prove me man to-day!" And as he spoke, he and his band parted like lightning from a cloud. De Foix and his associate meanwhile took brief counsel how they might best avail themselves of the obvious disunion that appeared to prevail among the host of the Crusaders. On the sudden---"While we are talking," cried De Foix, "all is done: look, noble De Comminges!" His companion threw his eyes in the direction, and saw

The fiery youth with desperate charge
Make for a space an opening large*—

* Scott.

and, trampling down the faint resistance of the slingers and archers, who had not even time to draw the short swords with which they were to support the charge of the chivalry, penetrate almost to where the knights of the royal train surrounded Prince Lewis, while the oriflamme shook in the standard-bearer's grasp at the successful temerity of the assault. The assault was indeed successful ; but Sir Amirald and his band, after their fierce force was spent, were repelled, and recoiled like a wave from a rock, retreating in foam and shivers, but rallying for the return even in the retreat. They were nobly upheld: De Foix and De Comminges gave their steeds the rein, and, lowering their heads to shun the sling-stones and arrows, they " charged with all their chivalry " in aid of Sir Amirald: half-way he met them, like a spent swimmer on a wave ; " Once more, once more," he gasped, " noble De Foix, noble De Comminges, and the day is ours: the Dauphin's band is all disarrayed; the wings wander wide."—" Seize the Dauphin, and

the day and the field is ours," cried De Foix, spurring faster. "What, boy, doth thy mettle fail now?"

Amirald's heart burned and bled at the thought of meeting the Crusaders as a foe; but the din of battle had stunned his ears, and the flame of fight was glowing in his eyes: he bowed his head, couched his lance, and spurred fiercely on with the rest. The first essay of Sir Amirald had broken and scattered the centre of the Crusaders; and now, on that broken and scattered array, the furious assault of the confederate Counts had its full effect: they charged, retired for a moment, wheeled and charged again, leaving at every attack as many corpses behind them as blows had been struck.

The Crusaders, who at first had almost scorned to exchange blows with their assailants, now began to gather round the oriflamme, to shield the sacred life of the Prince, leaving their men-at-arms to be slaughtered and trampled down without regard. The Dauphin himself, too late aware

of the presumption and temerity that always prompted the first movements of the Crusaders, began to throw anxious looks toward the wings, now wandering far and wide. "Where is the Bishop of Toulouse?" cried Lewis.--"Within the walls of Tarascon by this time," said Sir Aymer, who still rode near him, "if steed and steel hold out."--"Prophet of evil!" cried the Dauphin, darting a furious glance at him;--"but we shall soon have better tidings: hither rides a knight from the bishop's host."--"My lord the Dauphin!" cried the panting messenger, "the Bishop of Toulouse commends him to you: the holy and valiant prelate hath won the city of Tarascon, and prays you but to send a hundred men-at-arms to aid him to maintain his post."--"Meet state we are in," said Lewis chafing, "to lend him aid! Look thou how the tusks of those boars, De Foix and De Comminges, have gored our van! Let the bishop recall his forces on the instant, nor dream of his vaunted victory while the life of his liege lord is in peril!"--"I

will do your message," said the knight, who fell dead of his wounds as he turned his reins to ride. "Nought but blood and death around us!" cried Lewis: "where is Simon de Montfort?"---"Far on his way to gain the pass between the castle of Tarascon and the city," said Sir Aymer, "lest the former should yield support to the heretics."---"*Par le sang des Rois*," cried Lewis, gnashing his teeth with fury, "madness seems to have taken possession of all the host! In the name of all the fiends, how chances it that De Montfort is intercepting aid from a castle, which is held for the Crusaders by the trusty Lambert de Limons?"---"Perchance it may be necessary to secure it for thine escape, Prince Dauphin," continued Sir Aymer; "'specially if the close of this day resemble its beginning?"---"Raven, cease thy croaking!" cried the Dauphin fiercely. "Valiant knights," he added, "there will be but short trial of your patience. I see aid advancing from yon hill, the forces of Vaugelas and De Limosin. Ride up yon hill, valiant

knights, we shall thence command a better view, and be safe for a while from these fierce assailants! Lord Abbot of Normoutier, (for the abbot had once more been induced to ride at the head of his church vassals with the Crusaders,) ride up! See you not a descending band sweeping like a mist down yon hills? And see---and see, a messenger rides fast; he comes with good tidings!"---"Holy St. Benedict," cried the abbot of Normoutier, "did ever messenger of good tidings ride so ill-bested? He is stuck through with arrows, and can scarce sit his horse."---"Think you so, my lords?" said the Dauphin to his panting train, who, most of them wounded, had with difficulty gained the summit of the hill. There was no time for conjecture: the messenger, who was a scout of their own, sent out to reconnoitre the advancing aid, returned stuck with arrows, a score of archers in full pursuit of him, (or, in the language of the chase, growing to his haunches), but dispersing as his fleet but wounded steed bore

him beyond their reach, while the loyal vassal, though mortally wounded, shouted "*Sauve qui peut!* Raymond of Toulouse is in the field, crying 'No quarter;' and the incarnate devil, clad like a knight in sable armour, fights by his side. All mortal aid is vain. Betake you to shrift, noble knights: for me, my task is done. It is a bloody day; it will be a bloodier night!" He fell from his horse as he spoke. He died; and none marked his end.

The terrible intelligence of Count Raymond being in the field, the fearful report (credible enough in those days) of the evil spirit himself being his auxiliary, and the certainty of their being thus enclosed between two hosts,—the troops of De Foix and De Comminges, and those of Count Raymond,—sent a terror to every heart. "Save, save the Dauphin!" was the universal cry. Lewis was not wanting either in generosity or in valour. He dashed something like a tear from his eye, and then held a brief council

with the few who were near him in this last exigency.

“ Sir Aymer, what think'st thou?” he said. --“ That the oriflamme of France was never in such danger since it was blessed by the holy Abbot Luger, on the deliverance of thine ancestor Lewis VI.” answered the blunt but faithful knight.---“ Gaston de Mortigny,” said the Dauphin to his standard-bearer, “ what is thy counsel?”---“ The same that I gave your highness' father at the battle of Bovines,” said the firm knight: “ I told King Philip, that, while the oak stood, the branch should never be rent from its trunk; and, if your grace so please, the branch shall cleave to the royal sapling this day, as it did to the ancient trunk, let the storm blow as it lists.”---“ Then *let* the storm blow as it lists!” cried Prince Lewis, tossing his arms with agitated action, like the oak in a tempest; and all the knights around him shouted, “ Let the storm blow as it lists!” and clashing their lances against their shields, drowned their redoubled shouts in the martial sound.

A dreadful scene was going on in another part of the field. The Bishop of Toulouse found the post in the city of Tarascon, that his desperate valour had won, untenable. The messengers he had dispatched for aid had either perished, or returned with disastrous tidings of the Dauphin being hotly beset in the centre, and demanding succour instead of being able to yield it. The bishop kept his steady and far-seeing eye fixed on the oriflamme. “Gaston de Mortigny holds the standard still,” he said internally; “the Dauphin is but panic-struck.” Meanwhile, he saw and recognized the banners of Count Raymond on the hills; while De Comminges, at that moment, had detached his powers to assail him as he burst from the walls of Tarascon, that he could no longer keep, to hew his way back to the distracted and harassed centre of the host. He paused a moment: the approach of Raymond of Toulouse was inevitable—the assault of De Comminges was not less so; and the bishop, wiping his “mailed brow with his bloody hand,”

computed calmly that a thousand lives must be lost, ere he could win the centre of the host. With his voice of thunder he shouted to his followers, whom he was about to sacrifice ; with his battle-axe, wielded with resistless might, he began to deal death among all that encountered him. His strokes fell like a woodman's—not on oaks that he cleaved, but on twigs that he shred ; and the whole forest of the field went crushing down before him. He struck De Comminges below his horse's hoofs ; he mowed down his train like rushes before a peasant's staff ; he trampled on the dying bodies of his own men-at-arms. Yet, still there appeared “ a great gulph fixed ” between him and the centre of the host, where, though safety was doubtful, it could alone be won. De Foix, Sir Amirald, and their powers, rallying after their third sally to respire, and to dispatch aid to the fainting and defeated wing led by De Comminges, pushed their gored and panting steeds up a small eminence to reconnoitre. Here they paused for a moment ; and

Amirald's kindling eye rested with involuntary admiration on the progress of the Bishop of Toulouse, while he

“ Mowed across and made irregular harvest,
Defaced the pomp of battle,”*

trampling an hundred lives beneath him, and menacing a thousand more by the resistless might that had laid those hundreds low.

De Foix, after surveying the field for a moment, exclaimed, “ If Raymond of Toulouse *be* in the field—if Raymond *be* in the field—his war-word will be *Point de quartier* ! Get thee a fresh steed, Sir Amirald, and charge once more. They are marching like the wind towards the Castle of Tarascon : that betokens disaster and defeat. Throw thyself between them and the Castle of Tarascon, and leave the day to me.”

Sir Amirald cast one reluctant look of brave regret on the routed and prostrate wing of De Comminges, and hastened to obey the order of De Foix.

All the loyal chivalry of France had

* Dryden's Don Sebastian.

gathered round the Dauphin. He sat on his steed for some moments, agitated less by his danger than by that enthusiasm of devoted hearts that his own was too full to answer. He paused—fluctuated—turned his eyes towards the Castle of Tarascon—cast them again on the brave band that rallied round him. His foot was half in the stirrup to fly—his hand on his sword to fight — when the Bishop of Toulouse, dyed in blood (but not his own) from heel to helm, spurred the third steed he had bestrided that day by the Dauphin's side. “My lord the Dauphin,” he cried, “why this delay? Save your royal life, and let those of your subjects pay their prince's ransom!” The Prince hesitated. The counsel of those who surrounded him was all various and contradictory. “Seek the ramparts of the Castle of Tarascon!” cried some. —“Seek no rampart but that of the bodies of thy foes, that these loyal lances shall soon rear around thee!” cried others. — “Cease your vain tumult, knights!” shouted the

commanding voice of the bishop. "Raymond of Toulouse is in the field!"—"And men say the incarnate fiend fights beneath his banner!" cried the sole survivor of the bishop's train.—"An' it be so," cried the Abbot of Normoutier, "it is time for me to quit the field: I marched against mortal men; but I am no match for the devil."—"Coward priest! desertest thou thus?" cried Prince Lewis, as the abbot, with his numerous train, turned his reins; his crosier-bearer riding fast in the van.—"Recreant and disloyal churchman! dost thou fly—and at such a moment?" shouted the Bishop of Toulouse, as the advancing banners of Count Raymond waved over the diminished and distracted host of the Crusaders, like the wings of ravens over anticipated corpses.—"*Do pignora certa timendo*," quoth the abbot, clapping spurs to his steed; while all the church vassals followed fast, the crosier glittering in the van.—"False priest!" cried the Bishop of Toulouse, "would there were a bow in mine hand, and the arrow

should nail thee to the earth as thou ridest. Prince Dauphin, take counsel for thy life; escape to the Castle of Tarascon. The arrows of Count Raymond's host are already galling the flanks of thine. Some strange misadventure hath befallen us to-day. Win but the Castle of Tarascon, and to-morrow———" "On to the castle! my best lord," shouted a thousand voices; --- and Prince Lewis set on, well trusting that Simon de Montfort had secured his safe reception there.---"Take my reins," said the desponding prince to Gaston de Mortigny as he rode; "I am no longer fit to guide even mine own steed."---"My prince," said the firm standard-bearer, "mine hand was never wont to sustain other burthen than that of the oriflamme; and it shall be severed from my body ere it quit its grasp."

Voices on voices now shouted, "Haste! my liege, haste!---the foe perceives our disarray." --- "Raymond of Toulouse presses on our rear!" cried others, thronging fast with their disastrous tidings.

Lewis stood stupefied with shame and despair. Starting at length from his trance, "Take thou this shield," he cried, flinging it to a page; "and take thou this," to another, tearing off his surcoat, emblazoned with the royal lilies and the cross of the Crusaders; "a fugitive should no longer bear the insignia of a leader!"

De Foix marked their disarray. "Ride up!--ride up! Sir Amirald," he cried; "take two---take two hundred---take three---take all my choicest men, and throw thyself between the Crusaders and the Castle of Tarascon. My devoir, as brother-in-arms, binds me to rescue De Comminges." They parted each on his desperate enterprize; and that instantaneous parting was like the eruption of distinct flashes of lightning from an overcharged cloud.

As Sir Amirald rode, his eye involuntarily glanced (in spite of the deathful impetuosity of his speed,) on the scenery that surrounded the defile through which he pressed. The banners of Count Raymond surmounted

the distant hills ; his van rushed glittering from their summits, and amid their windings, the track of the gemmed and gilded crosier, glancing and disappearing as the riders wound up the eminences and descended the declivities, marked the flight of the Abbot of Normoutier. But all power of observation was lost, when he hasted to fling himself between the power of the Crusaders and the Castle of Tarascon; for at his first approach, the castle, which till that moment had stood like a dark, unexploding volcano, from bartizan and battlement, from every loop and shot-hole, rained down such a shower from bow and arbalist, that half the boldest that Sir Amirald led lay corse beneath the first discharge, and the second rank who succeeded formed as they fell only a rampart for those who followed to scale, and meet the same fate ere they had climbed the dreadful and slippery ascent of mangled bodies and streaming blood.

Lambert de Limons, an expert tactician, had reserved all his artillery for the crisis

which he foresaw, and its effect was complete. It was in vain that Sir Amirald tried to rally his powers; exclusive of the shot from the loop-holes, that fell like the gigantic hail on the foes of Joshua, fifty cross-bow-men stationed on the bartizan, (like riflemen in modern tactics,) of whom every one could shoot "five hundred feet him fro," were ranged there, taking down at their leisure man and life. Sir Amirald felt his post untenable: he was about to wind his bugle to recall the few survivors, when an unusual movement among the Crusaders made him pause.

The Dauphin and the Bishop of Toulouse, with their trains, in taking their determination to seek shelter in the Castle of Tarascon, had reckoned on their safe arrival there, as the wing of their army led by Simon de Montfort was almost under its towers; but ere their flight (for such it was) could bear them to the spot, Sir Amirald was there, and Simon de Montfort was already mortally wounded,

All now was tumult and consternation. De Montfort, whose fierce spirit predominated even in death, called for a fresh steed, but vainly attempted to mount him. Mental terrors, hitherto unknown, seemed working together with his bodily suffering. From the moment that he had heard the wild report of an evil spirit in the guise of a sable knight riding in aid of Count Raymond, he had exclaimed that it was the spirit of the Count de Beziers, (of whose murder he was more than suspected,) and exclaimed that whenever he attempted to raise his battle-axe, a hand in black armour lay on his arm, and weighed down by its pressure soul and brand. But at the voice of Prince Lewis he seemed madly excited once more, and grasping the arm of his squire, "Thou seest," he said, "this gash on my forehead so overflows mine eyes with blood that I can no longer see to guide my reins; place me, I charge thee, faithful Raoul, right before the Dauphin; and on my feet, while they can support me, I will do a warrior's deeds,

or die a warrior's death."---"Stay not to listen to this madman, my liege," cried the Bishop of Toulouse; "make for the castle ere all be lost." The bishop's action gave full warrant for his words; he spurred right onward towards the barrier that Sir Amiral's band presented betwixt him and the castle: "the iron sleet of arrowy shower" that had rained from the Castle of Tarascon intermitted on the bishop's approach; the garrison, by the direction of Lambert de Limons, sparing their foes, lest they should destroy their friends. Amiral seized the moment to extend his line between the lowered drawbridge and the approach of the bishop's power.

The bishop paused on his desperate position: the protended lances of Amiral's band were before him. Suddenly forsaking his stirrups, with a hand of iron he twice and thrice plunged his dagger into the quivering flanks of his steed; and the noble animal, agonizing under the blows, with one spring cleared the lances of the band,

and fell on his haunches amid its centre. Another stab of the dagger raised him in a moment: the bishop forsook the reins, and wielded his battle-axe. He had plunged like a rock falling into the ocean, but the dispersed waves soon recoiled. Many lay crushed beneath the weight of the impulse: others rose; and others, who could not rise, grasped with their maimed and dying hands at the bishop's reins, which lay loose on the neck of his steed. Those hands were severed by the blows of his battle-axe, wielded right and left with a velocity and force as resistless as they are indescribable; and the last spring of his martyred steed lodged the bishop on the drawbridge of the Castle of Tarascon. "Follow him—follow the valiant prelate, my liege!" cried the Crusaders. Prince Lewis spurred his steed.

At that moment, a sortie from the Castle pouring over the lowered drawbridge, forced Sir Amiral on, spite of himself, till in the tide of battle his hand was on the Dauphin's rein. "Base renegade!" cried a voice,

“lay'st thou hand on thy prince's rein?”—
“What am I now?” said Lewis, as, stupified, he appeared to ask of Amiralde whether he were prisoner.—“What art thou? The Dauphin of France still,” answered the voice.—“Leave me to deal with this Sir Knight Sans-barbe.” And his blow, wielded with no light hand, made Sir Amiralde yield hold of the Dauphin's rein, and turn in his own defence. His antagonist, by many evolutions performed with more skill than force, but which proved him master of the strategy of the age, succeeded in drawing Sir Amiralde to some distance from the spot. Amiralde, incensed at being thus deluded; and baffled by one whose hoary beard was visible through the bars of his helmet, now struck with such good aim and hearty hand, that the old knight almost breathless exclaimed, “Hold, sir boy! By heaven, thou smitest like Guillaume *le Charpentier*,* in the old

* So called, because his strokes in battle were said to be as heavy as those of a *carpenter*. See Mills's History of the Crusades. One would have thought

Crusades. No marvel thou art silent : thou lackest all thy breath for such blows." Amiralld answered him in the words of an old chivalric song---

*Un Chevalier, n'en doutez pas,
Doit ferir hault, et parler bas.*

--" Say'st thou me so ?" said the old knight, whose associations appeared to be awakened, but in no friendly manner, by the sound of his voice. " Then have at thee !" and he dealt a blow at the casque of Amiralld (the rivets of which were loosened in the struggle of the day) with such good-will and steady aim, that it rolled on the ground ; and his head was exposed to the next blow of his adversary. It descended, but was paralyzed in its descent as Sir Aymer discovered the features of his former protégé, Amiralld. Its force was, however, such as to lay the young knight prostrate before him. " Strike," said Amiralld ; " but, as thou art a knight, protect a young *le forgeron* would have been " more germane to the matter."

female in yon beleaguered and distressed town, whom thou hast, I believe, bereft of all other protector." Sir Aymer was at the moment beside Amirald, and supporting him on his knee as he lay. "Protect *her*!" he cried, almost in tears,---"*her* who hath been thy ruin? Now, out on her, hilding and harlot! Could she not be content with going to the devil her own heretic way, but she must needs have thee to bear her company? Look up, my boy, and live; and a fair course of chivalry and love is yet bright before thee." ---"Oh!" said the youth, faintly raising himself on his arm, while a sickening agony overcame his whole frame,---"Oh that, instead of defaming the most pure and heavenly being of God's creation, thou wouldst adopt her better creed!"

"Teach me---tell me it!" cried Sir Aymer in the overflowings of his kindly heart, as he bent over his dying favourite. "But, no, boy; thou mayest spare the labour!" he said half-sighingly, half-lightly. "I could resign unintelligible dogmas and inexplicable mys-

teries ; but I never, never can resign that devotion that worships female saints ;--- no, never for thee, dear boy, (and thou wast very dear to me,) can I give up that dear devotion. Pshaw ! change the visage of a Madonna for that of one of thy cowed barbes !”

At this moment a shout from the Crusaders announced that the Dauphin had reached the castle in safety ; and the loyal-hearted knights now took the calm counsel of despair together, like the sailors who despatched a boat from their sinking ship to land James the Second on the coast of Scotland, and, as he reached it in safety, gave him three cheers from the deck of their own devoted vessel.

There was but too much cause for their despair. De Foix, who had collected the routed wing of De Comminges, flung his whole force between the Crusaders and the Castle of Tarascon. The Bishop of Toulouse, by desperate valour, aided by the superhuman strength of his gigantic frame, had

passed the barrier : so had Prince Lewis, by the aid of his loyal knights. But as Simon de Montfort, blinded with his own blood, and maddened with the agony of his wounds, was led towards the bridge, a *quarrel*, from a cross-bow aimed at De Foix, who stood nearer the tower, struck on his head, mingling the fragments of his helmet with his brains and blood,—and the Champion of the Church was no more !* The body was hurried into the castle by the attendants.

The gap thus made in the battle of the Crusaders was closed in a moment ; but the loss of Simon de Montfort was recalled and remembered for centuries afterwards.

There was not a moment now to lament his loss. The powers of Raymond of Toulouse came on apace, the sable knight raging like a whirlwind in its van : De Foix and his band, blazing like a moat of fire between the

* The Count de Montfort perished thus, not under the castle of Tarascon, but the walls of Toulouse.—*Vide Perrin.*

Crusaders and the castle, few passed it with life, and fewer still who did so survived long. The strife beneath the walls resembled more the struggle of demons in their native element of fire, than the strife of mortal men. Steed and stirrup, lance and sword, were forsaken: ---it was breast to breast---limb to limb---dagger to dagger---heart to heart,---canopied by arrow-flight---darkened by the discharge of war-wolf and catapult.

Amid this scene of demoniac horror and madness, it was admirable to see how the strong feeling of religion alone armed its humblest professor in panoply.

The Monk of Montcalm, who had followed humbly in the rear of the splendid array of the Abbot of Normoutier, had, on the first intelligence of his defection, thrown himself into the Castle of Tarascon; and now he stood, amid the flight of five hundred arrows, to do his holy duty by those who fought and those who fell. Warned of

his danger, but slighting it, he stationed himself on the bartizan of the great gate that commanded the drawbridge. From that spot he gave the general benediction to the hundreds that were perishing; and then, exalting his voice and straining his sight, attempted to give absolution to the individuals whom he saw claiming it: and, amid the horror and tumult of that mortal fight, many a dying Crusader turned his swimming eye, and tried to clasp his blood-steeped hands, and to raise his maimed and shattered limbs, to meet the last blessing, or even to catch the last sight, of the holy Monk of Montcalm!

At the first shout, announcing the escape of the Dauphin, Sir Aymer, who had led his antagonist from the spot merely to secure his Prince's safety, began, now that that was provided for, to think of his own. "Farewell!" he cried: "and yet it pities my very heart to leave thee thus; though I may be in worse plight myself, an' I tarry longer. I

must needs leave the devil and the heretic together to settle accounts : I will defer the closing of mine with him while I can :”—and he galloped off. Yet, with a touch of his natural kindliness of heart, returning for a moment, he told Amiral, that if he could reach the city of Tarascon, he might shelter there in safety ; as the report of the plagues raging there was a mere *ruse*, invented by Lambert de Limons, and executed by the malignity of the dying wretch, who was in fact its only victim.

As he disappeared, the eyes of Amiral, swimming in mortal sickness, were lifted towards the hills on which the giant form of the sable knight rode, careering like the master and compeller of the stormy clouds that were gathering fast on their summits. His train came far behind, for not one dared to ascend or descend the precipices abreast of him, nor even on the plain could they match for a moment the supernatural fleetness of his course. Amiral's senses failed him as he gazed on this portentous figure and its

movements; and saw the hills dimly mixed in his swimming vision with the form that swept along them. When he recovered from his trance, he found himself in a glen, small, narrow, and solitary, apart from the battle, but not from its roar, whose thunders from time to time startled its lonely echoes. His first sensation was amazement at finding himself in a place of comparative safety: he raised himself slowly on his elbow like one who, awaking from slumber, sees himself conveyed into an unknown chamber, and wonders how he was brought there. There was no one to tell him that the sable knight had commanded some of his train, who were about to nail him to the earth where he lay, to raise and convey him to the nearest place of possible safety. There was, indeed, no one to tell this, or aught else; for Amiral soon perceived that the glen was choked with dead bodies up to the bases of the rocks that enclosed it. They were the bodies of some of De Foix's band; and this pass seemed to have been disputed with mortal hostility: every

man had fallen where he fought, and every man lay on his back as he fell.

As Amirald looked round on this death-place of unburied corpses, the agonizing thirst excited by his wounds was aggravated by the sound of "gurgling waters near;" and the lonely, gentle sound was a kind of rebuke uttered by Nature to the outrages exercised by man in her holiest quietudes.

Amirald tried to raise and drag himself in the direction of the sound. As he crawled over the dead bodies—for he could not move without touching or treading on one—a groan issued beneath his feet: he started—it came from one that yet lived. Amirald, stooping, tried to recognize form or lineament in the breather; but he was so mangled and crushed by his wounds and fall, that his mother, searching the field, would not have known her own child.

Forgetting the thirst that parched him, Amirald toiled to raise the sufferer, and at length dragged from beneath the weight of incumbent bodies the giant-form of Boa-

nerges. Amirald's short warfare under the banners of De Foix had made him acquainted with the name and person of the warlike pastor, and with increasing effort he succeeded at last in placing him with his back against a rock. He was dying. Amirald made his way to the spring—tasted it—brought back some drops in his cloven shield, and bathed the brow and lip of the dying man. They refreshed him. "Raise me up," cried Boanerges, "if thou hast any christian mercy."—"I will," said the youth, "if my failing strength can sustain thee ; but I fear thy state is past all hope."—"It is not that," said Boanerges—"it is not that ; but did I not hear, as I fell—or was it a dream in my deadly trance? hath the oppressor ceased ? is Simon de Montfort dead."—"Simon de Montfort hath perished," said Amirald, "and the Crusaders are defeated. The powers of De Foix and De Comminges, aided by Raymond of Toulouse, hold the field."—"Raise me higher, higher, good youth," cried the stern Albigeois, "that I may see the slaughter—the slaughter of the

enemies of the Lord, while my dying eyes yet can behold it.”---“In the name of God,” cried Amiral, shuddering at this posthumous vindictiveness, “turn your mind to better thoughts. I am not so well versed in thy creed as thou must be ; but does it suggest no other comfort at thy dying hour?”

“The everlasting hills take part against them,” cried Boanerges: “they reel round and charge; and their leaders are the storms and the clouds that have so often been the shelter of the Albigeois ; they are weaving winding-sheets for them on the hill-tops. The spirits of those who perished there are coming to greet them, mother and babe ; but”---extending his mangled arms towards the Castle of Tarascon---“Simon de Montfort hath perished, and envies his victims already.”

“Alas! alas!” cried Amiral, “think not of such things now---speak not so fearfully ;” and, in involuntary forgetfulness of his new creed, he held up his cross-handled sword to fix the eyes of the dying man on the sym-

bol of redemption. A rigid pallor had overspread the face of Boanerges ; but at the sight of the cross his eyes kindled with a ghastly light, and lifting his maimed hand, "Take away the abomination!" he cried: then in a fainter voice, "Nay, let me see it once more; the blade is red with Crusaders' blood." He gazed, smiled, and expired.

Amirald now felt as if alone on earth : the last survivor near him lay a corse at his feet. He turned his heavy eyes towards the Castle of Tarascon, where the work of death was still going on ; for the powers of Count Raymond were now almost beneath its walls, mowing down by hundreds the remains of the Crusaders, who, dispirited by the fate of De Montfort and the flight of the Dauphin and the Bishop of Toulouse, seemed to submit to their fate with the passiveness of sheep penned in a fold to the unresisted ravages of a band of wolves. As band after band of Raymond's army swept along the hills, Amirald raised his voice, and waved his bloody scarf, to call for aid; as he felt that a knight of De Foix's

army would meet prompt assistance from the allied band of the Count of Toulouse.

The thunder of their speed drowned his feeble appeal : his weakness increased ; and he was sinking down half in stupor, half in despair, to die, when the tones of a heart-remembered voice, uttered in the most piercing distress, roused him in a moment to life and energy. Other bands besides those of Raymond were traversing the field : among them were some of the troops of the Bishop of Toulouse, whom he had led within the very walls of the city in his first wild and unsupported assault, and had left behind him to fight back their desperate way, or to perish. A few had succeeded in the former attempt ; but previously they had encumbered themselves with some rich plunder in the town, and some females distinguished for beauty---and aware of a circuitous direction by which they might reach the postern of the castle, they had skirmished on the skirts of the battle, and now, by the shelter of twilight, dispersing in small bands and various directions, were

speeding onwards with their respective plunder.

Amid a share rudely divided and fiercely contested was Genevieve, whose beauty made her too precious a prize to be lightly resigned. As a few, who had parted from the rest, were hurrying with their victim through the solitary glen, (as their least dangerous path,) the sight of Amirald's crest and broken plume caught her eye, and her shriek of "Save me! for the love of Heaven, save me!" thrilled in his ringing ears. To start to his feet, to wave his broken brand, to rush among the ruffians, and be felled to the earth by their blows, was but the action of a moment. Of all that followed he was unconscious: but his splendid armour marking him as no vulgar prisoner, his body, still senseless, was borne into the Castle of Tarascon, when nightfall rendered the approach to the postern safe; and along with it was borne that of Genevieve---not senseless, indeed, but silent in despair.

CHAPTER VIII.

Come in, and let us banquet royally
After this golden day of victory.

SHAKSPEARE'S *Henry the Sixth.*

COUNT Raymond of Toulouse feasted that night in his tent, with all his warriors, in the pride of victory. Their spirits were elated, and with reason. This was no triumph by ambuscade over the Crusaders, like the first they had obtained ;—no desultory skirmish, like that in which the Bishop of Toulouse's troops had been cut off by the Count, when he attempted to intercept the progress of the Albigeois towards Arragon :—they had met the Crusaders in their might, face to face, and in pitched battle had defied and defeated them. Meanwhile goblets were filled and drained to the pledge of “ *Vive*

Toulouse !" and already, in the imagination of the revellers, the Count was established in his territorial city, and his subjects allowed the free exercise of their religion.

Count Raymond sat and listened; sometimes elated and sometimes depressed, as he heard the boasts of victory lately achieved. He remembered how often he had been thus hailed and greeted by lips that were now cold! He dwelt inwardly on a wearying recollection of war, woe, persecution, and vicissitude for twenty years, with gleams of success between, like the brief light of a sun in a wintry sky, darkness fast following. As he thought thus, he raised the goblet to his lips and drained it; resolving to forget the past if he could, and to enjoy the present. The debate of the knights struck on his ear without exciting his attention, till one of them demanded, "Wherefore did not that sable knight, who had such noble share in our toil to-day, meet us at the feast to-night?"—"Who hath seen him but in battle?"

said another. "He shuns all human converse and society."---"He never assists at mass, nor utters his prayers apart, like an Albigeois," added another speaker.

The mention of the sable knight's name was like "the letting out of water:" report followed report, and whisper whisper. "Though he shuns all converse," it was said, "he talks often with that ill-favoured page who ever follows him,---more like the imp of a wizard than the attendant of a noble knight.

"Who hath ever seen his visor unclosed," asked an ancient knight, "since he hath joined our host?"---"Who would wish to see it?" replied another: "his casque to-day sustained blows that would have felled earthly man."---"And the arrows slew right and left," said another, "but pierced not him: they glanced on his mail like chaff flung against the wind."---"And his steed, with five barbed arrows quivering in its flank, and its sides all gore, made a leap that no mortal steed ever made, bestrode by mortal rider," added another.

“Count of Toulouse,” said the ancient knight, “I would rather lose the fairest field that ever mortal arm struck in, were life the wage and a throne the prize, than win it by evil aid, such as I dread was marshalled on thy side to-day in the form of that unknown knight.”

“Noble sir,” said the Count, with his wonted fluctuation, “you think not so darkly of the stranger? -- and yet, perchance——”

“Heed him not, noble Count Raymond!” said a youthful knight---“heed not those dreams! I saw nought achieved by this sable knight, as ye call him, beyond mortal prowess.” A murmur was heard among the knights. “I say,” he continued, raising his voice, “the fears of the cravens he dealt with first distorted him into a fiend; and then they ran away from the fiend their fears had raised.”

“Fair lord,” said the ancient knight, “may I be heard?”---“With all good favour,” said

the Count. "What is it you would demand, sir knight?"---"How this nameless knight chanced to lend you the aid of his arm, of which all must allow the might, though many may doubt by whom that might is given?"---"I will tell ye," said Count Raymond, as if he felt relief like that which confession gives to a penitent,---"I will tell ye. Harken, noble gentlemen and friends, all of you "

He leaned with his arms on the table as he spoke, looking thoughtfully: the heads of all within hearing were closely inclined towards him, and many a cheek was pale at the expected tale, which the approach of danger and death that day had tinged only with a fiercer red.

"It was on the evening," said Count Raymond, "that the sufferings of my oppressed vassals, and the treachery and pride of Rome, had compelled me once more to take up arms in their defence, and trust their cause and mine once more to heaven :---on

that evening I sat sadly in my chamber, having only two of my household 'squires near me, while I revolved in my own troubled and silent thought, how much and vainly I had consulted for the welfare of my subjects; seeking, I appeal to God, only their good, while I was ever, alas! unwillingly working them evil. I thought of the wars I had been forced into; the peaces I had been compelled to make; the concessions to the Holy Father, that had been followed only by fresh encroachments; and the resistance, that had been punished by severer chastisement: and I sighed as I beheld my shield once more taken from the wall of my chamber. It waxed late, when a page entered, followed by him ye call the sable knight. He advanced in silence, with the bars of his helmet closed. I commanded to place a seat for him: he declined it, waving his hand, but still in silence. I do vouch, noble friends, though the knight met my greeting courteously, there was some-

thing chilling in his presence; such as, perchance, yourselves may have felt at times." A responsive shudder among the guests answered him. "He spoke at length," continued Raymond. 'Lord Count,' he said, 'thou art about to do battle against thy foes: I offer thee the aid of my lance and sword; perchance thou wilt not find them powerless. But I demand of thee three conditions, on which my service shall be duly tendered:---that thou never demand my name, or ask why my shield bears no cognizance; that thou never require that the bars of my visor be unclosed; and lastly, that if this arm achieve thee victory, thou wilt grant whatever boon I ask, save thine honour, life, and faith.' I yielded and-----" "This we have heard," said the ancient knight. "But, lord of Toulouse, thou hast another tale to tell of this stranger knight, or report wrongs thee and him foully?"---"It is true," said Count Raymond; "there is a tale---a passage---that did, in a manner, force on me

the fear (the feeling I would say) that our dark associate is formed of other mould than mortal men."—"Reserve the disclosure for a fitter occasion," said a voice close beside Count Raymond's chair. Count Raymond sank back in his seat, but lifted his eye slowly in the direction whence the voice proceeded.

The sable knight stood there, unannounced, unattended even by the ill-favoured page, his constant companion. At the sound so suddenly heard, many of the knights started on their feet, and unsheathed their daggers; while others cowered where they sat, and hid their foreheads in their clasped hands for a time. The tent was lit only by one large lamp, suspended from the roof right over the centre of the table where the guests sat; and during the earnest conversation between them and Count Raymond, the pages had neglected to trim it, so that only a dim and waning light fell on the darkened groupe with their

gleaming daggers, and the towering form and ebony-like mail of the sable knight.

“Sir sable knight,” said Count Raymond, at length recovering himself, “your appearance amongst us hath been somewhat sudden, but is not the less welcome: I pray you, sit, and partake of our cheer.” The figure in the sable armour shook its head in silence. “Sir sable knight, I pledge you in a cup of wine: you will not refuse my pledge!” A silent gesture of disinclination was again the only answer. “By my faith, sir knight, this is somewhat discourteous; but if thou wilt neither partake of our feast, nor answer to our fair terms of courtesy, declare, after what manner likes thee best, thy purpose and thy pleasure here.” The figure, by silent but emphatic gestures, signified its wish to speak with him alone. Count Raymond’s cheek changed its hue at this invitation; and twenty voices, in eager whispers, murmured, “Go not with him, lord Count, at peril of thy life—or more!” The figure

did not utter a sound, but continued to repeat its gestures with such an air of gentle invitation, and such a sorrowful inclination of the head withal, that Raymond, ashamed of his fears, rose from his seat, and withdrawing the curtain of a recess in the pavilion, entered it, followed by the figure, leaving on the minds of his guests an impression of anxious and indefinable awe. For some time not a word was spoken; nothing could be heard but the rustling of the mantles of the guests, as they laid down their untasted wine to gaze on the closed aperture, and then hushed the sound, to watch what might issue from it: but not a breath could be heard---all within the pavilion was as still as death. To their high-wrought anxiety the delay seemed protracted, and their very silence was becoming insupportable to themselves, when suddenly a deep and prolonged groan burst on their ears, and steps were heard passing from the pavilion. There was no restraining them now:

they rushed into the recess, where they found only Count Raymond, who, after a hurried inquiry into the cause of their intrusion, and an assurance, in a broken voice, of his safety, returned with them into the pavilion, and took his seat at the board again.

But from that moment the taciturnity of his companion seemed to have possessed him : his goblet stood beside him untouched, and the most earnest and searching inquiries could not extort from him a syllable relative to his conference with the sable knight. " Press me no farther, lords," he said at length heavily, " with questions a solemn oath forbids me to answer. Meanwhile believe this, that since I was man, never was I so sore amazed, or in such deep heaviness of spirit : and now methinks it waxes late---A fair good rest to all. Our wearied and wounded host forbid us to invest the Castle of Tarascon on to-morrow ; but on the following day we will march to the assault with all our forces, and shake

off the gloom which this strange visitation hath inspired. But, ere we set forth," he added in a deeper tone, "we must purify the host, nor hope to prosper with stained hands, and hearts burthened with unatoned guilt. A dark and fearful deed hath been done; and *one* amongst us must expiate his crime, even the flesh: for the soul, may God absolve it." He retired, and every knight departed silent and thoughtful to his tent.

The sable knight had returned to his, where, as usual, he found his page, who never quitted it day or night, awaiting him. This unfortunate youth appeared to have been the victim of some deadly distemper: his figure was slender, though somewhat awkward; but his hands, and what could be seen of his face, had the livid and discoloured hue rather of a corse than of a living creature. A bandage was over more than half his face, to conceal the loss of an eye, which had been extinguished by the malignity of the disease; while the other gleamed with a brightness that seemed pre-

ternatural, when contrasted with the deadly colour of his features. His shoulders, too, were bent and distorted: and it was not possible to conceive a more ghastly and revolting form than that of the ill-favoured page, whose inseparability from his mysterious master was not, in the minds of those who remarked it, a circumstance likely to diminish the impression caused by his deformity, profound silence, and total abstraction from all human companionship.

As the sable knight entered the tent, the page prepared to touch his harp. "Forbear!" said the knight: "I am not in the vein. What star is that," he continued, looking upward, "that burns so bright in heaven right above the tent?"—"Sages call it Orion," answered the page.---"Are not the pure lights of heaven," said the knight, speaking to himself as was his wont---"are they not weary of looking on the crimes and sorrows of earth? When will they close their bright eyes, and leave men to do the

deeds of darkness by the light that best befits them?" A pause followed, for the page never spoke till addressed by his lord. "From whom didst thou learn thy starry lore?" said the knight.---"An ancient monk taught it me, so please you."---"And was it a monk who taught thee to touch thy harp so masterly?"---"I had another teacher for that," replied the youth: "a skilful, but a wondrous harsh one---it was grief."---"I believe thee, in truth," said the knight; "and never did the hand of pupil counterfeit that of master so well."---"Mournful as its touch is," said the youth, "it hath sometimes won me back from despair."---"And me from madness!" exclaimed the knight, with one of those stormy bursts of terrible emotion, which now no longer startled his unfortunate companion. "Try," he added, "try if the spell be lost!" The page obeyed, and accompanied his harp with a voice whose sweet but wild tones had in them nothing earthly---

Oh,

Oh, sweet is the feeling, and sweet the hour,
When Fancy, the bounds of existence scorning,
Restores to past visions of joy their power,
And the twilight of love beams as bright as its morn-
ing !

When day sinks low on its pillar of fire,
The sky with amethyst glories is beaming ;
And oft, when the light of the soul hath set,
The heart reflects its departed gleaming.

But, oh ! how much of the mingled and sad
Revives with the dreams of the *past* in the soul !
How sweet and bitter from Memory's cup
Is the drop that was nectar in Joy's bright bowl !

“ Cease thy strain—it is all too light,”
said the knight. The page sighed. “ And
yet my lord has loved the praise of beauty
well.”—“ *Once*,” said the knight, in a voice
that sounded like a groan: “ but, I know not
how it is, thy song turns ever on the beauty
of man—a dull theme—not on that of wo-
men, one more suited to thy sex.”—“ Nor
wonder,” said the page, with sudden anima-
tion. “ From woman beauty is almost de-
manded ; the homely are slighted and neg-
lected. In man we seek but strength, per-

chance symmetry ; but when to these is added beauty, we feel gratitude to nature as for an unsought favour : it is, in truth, gratuitous bounty, and we gaze on it with the same delight that we would on a mountain fertile in roses, or a palace encrusted with gems.”---“ This is strange speech for one of thy sex to hold,” said the knight. The youth was silent. “ Cheer thee, my boy !” said the knight, as if answering his silence. “ No woman, in the softness of her sex, could have been a more faithful attendant on a wayward lord than thou hast been on me.”---“ Oh, my dear master !” cried the page : and, grasping the knight’s hand while he knelt, he pressed his livid lips to it, and bathed it with tears. “ I have been a stern master to thee !” said the knight, melting.---“ Oh, no ; ever most gentle and most gracious !” ---“ I have but one task more for thee,” said the knight, collecting his voice ; “ and then”-----He paused ; while the page rose, and folding his hands on his bosom, stood reverently before him. “ As we passed the shrine of

holy St. Martin, on the other side the Rhone," said the knight, in a hurried voice, "I neglected to pay my devotions there. I am a sinful man, and would employ the orisons of one more pure than myself. Go there, I charge thee, by the dawn, which is now breaking: four men-at-arms shall be thy guard, and thy path lies wide of the Crusaders' post. Offer up thy prayers, and tell thy beads there for thy unhappy master; but, at the peril of thy life, return not hither till the sun hath twice risen on yonder hill." The unfortunate page seemed to listen as to his death's doom. He fell on his knees, apparently in supplication; but at the stamp of the knight's foot he rose trembling, and, bursting into an agony of tears, retired.

The day was now fully broke, and the knight was slowly, and with head declined, pacing his tent, when a herald of Count Raymond appeared at the entrance. The knight raised his head. "Speak thy lord's message, and briefly!" he said.---"My lord,"

said the herald, bowing low,---“ my lord prays you, Sir sable knight, to pause yet another day on your dreadful purpose ; and if then----” The knight waved him off with a gesture of fierce impatience. “ Commend me to thy lord,” he said ; and his better nature struggling within him---“ and thank him, good fellow : but tell him, that he look to have a scaffold reared in the centre of his host to-day ; for blood that is flowing now in living veins must stain it ere many hours be past.”---“ Am I to do no other message to my lord ?” said the herald with sad reluctance. The sable knight paused. “ Tell him,” said he at length, “ that I pray him to send some holy man to receive my confession, and, if it be possible, to absolve my soul. Let none else, at the peril of their lives, approach this tent to-day !” The herald departed.

The sable knight’s request was not found easy to be complied with : not an ecclesiastic in the host of Count Raymond would undertake the task. But, as the demand had

been so earnestly and solemnly made, the Count despatched a herald with a trumpet to the Castle of Tarascon, praying them within of Christian grace to send some holy man to shrieve a penitent at point to die, and promising on his knightly word that he should have safe conduct to and from his camp.

It was late in the evening when the holy man arrived: it was the Monk of Montcalm. He was conducted immediately to the tent of the sable knight, which had been inaccessible to human foot but his all that day.

Some hours elapsed, and at their close the monk and his penitent were still together; the proud and lofty form of the knight kneeling at the feet of the pale monk, who, in the progress of his confession, (with all its increasing horrors,) sat with uplifted eyes and locked hands as he listened.

“She promised,” continued the penitent, “that she would shew my pre-doomed victim on the very night that the sacrifice was to be made; and she asked me for my ring, and swore she would produce it on that night!

She did : but it was my bridal night !—and the victim was to be my bride ! And such were her credentials from heaven or hell, that I believed her. She recalled the very words of my birth-vow—that I was sworn to sacrifice the last survivor of mine enemy's race !—and that last survivor was she whose hand I had clasped at the altar that morn ! I remember rushing into the chamber that night more like a fiend than a bridegroom. There was but one way to absolve me of my oath, and yet to shun the impossible crime : I drew my dagger and——” (the monk caught his arm)---“ plunged it into mine own bosom ! She saw it. Deeming me mad, she sprang up and struggled with me for the bloody weapon. I tried to inflict another--a mortal wound ; and in the struggle——” “ Hold ! hold !” cried the monk, gasping.--“ It was not I !---not I !” cried the penitent in a piercing tone of agony : “ her own hand dealt the blow ! But when I saw the bosom, so long pictured in my visions, pierced---when I beheld the blood flow, and the body fall---I

rushed from the chamber with the speed and the despair of a fallen spirit hurled from Heaven. My wounds bled fast ; I heeded them not, but ran on till I fell exhausted. After that I remember nought. I was for some months, as they told me, and as I had fearful cause to believe, where the unhappy seek to be. The maniac sorceress, whatever she was, who had urged me to my horrible fate, watched over my returning health and reason ; but it was for her own deadly purposes, as a witch watches her caldron till the waters seethe and the flames sparkle to her devilish will. She nursed me, too, in that unhallowed place, the ruined tower of Hugo, and gave me for mine attendant that *ill-favoured page* who hath furnished such matter of scoff and slander, but who was, in truth, a most gentle and feeling boy. I sent him hence but this morning, that he might not see me perish.”---“ Go on,” said the monk in a tone of singular calmness.---“ I have nought more to disclose,” said the penitent, “ but this : that when-restored to

bodily, not to mental health, I demanded my horse and arms. They were ready for me, as if raised by magic power ; for that mysterious being seems always to have wealth at her will, though not at her use. But when I declared my purpose of joining the Crusaders once more, and added the wish that the first lance levelled by the foe might find my heart, or the first arrow my brain, she prostrated herself before me, and, with such inconceivable agonies of supplication, implored that I should not draw brand against Count Raymond of Toulouse : that, all-careless where I fought, coveting only death, and deeming that I might as soon find it from a Crusader's hand as another's, and reckless where, so it was found, I offered the aid of mine arm to Count Raymond, on condition ——” “ I know the rest,” said the monk, “ by true report.”---“ Then thou knowest that I have sought Death in battle---yea, wooed him---but he has not come to me. The arrows missed me as they flew ; the swords struck against me as if they were rushes : I could not die---

yet I will not live :—and I have demanded of Count Raymond, as a boon——” “ That which he shall never grant !” said the monk, rising hastily, as some distant recollections rolled like a mist over his soul ; while amid them he thought he could trace clear images of past events, for he had been acquainted with the Count of Toulouse in his youth ; and the confession he had heard awakened the thought of a discovery all but miraculous. —“ Holy father, mock not a desperate man !” said the penitent.—“ Son,” replied the monk in a solemn voice, “ by thy soul’s safety—by thy hopes of Heaven and mercy—by the powers of the Church, in whose name I pronounce thee absolved of all crime---I adjure thee to remain here in peace till my return, and banish despair from thy heart the while !”

He did not return : but in a short space Count Raymond, rushing into the tent, strained in his arms his first-born, “ his beautiful, his brave ;” and in mingled agonies of contrition and fondness demanded pardon of his child, while he heaped blessings on his head.

The astonished youth replied not, but knelt in reverence to receive the blessings so tenderly yet so mysteriously bestowed.—“ On me be thy curse, my son !” cried Raymond, when he recovered his voice : “ mine be the guilt of that vow that I madly bound on thy soul whilst yet a child ! Amid the flames of my burning castle, amid the murder of thy mother and thy brothers, I found only thee and my youngest boy surviving ; thou, my Paladour, wast then near five years old, thy brother but an infant ; amid blood and flames, in my heart’s despair, I made thee swear to avenge the slaughter of thy house, even on the last descendant of its enemy’s race. Oh, may God absolve me for a sin so deadly. Then taking thee, my eldest boy, in mine arms, while the faithful menial, who had saved ye both, followed with thine infant brother in hers, I sought shelter for the night where I might. Amid the dark hills that surround the castle of Courtenaye we were assailed by ruffians : I fought till I fell ; though never had mine arm struck with such strength as

it did for thee, its precious burthen. I recovered from the trance, into which I had sunk through loss of blood ; but I recovered to find myself childless. The attendant had fled with my infant at the beginning of the fray, and thou hadst wandered, or been borne away : nor ever did thine unhappy father hear aught of either till this hour. One hope I cherished, till that hope, long deferred, became almost despair. I had, by a preparation taught me by a skilful monk, impressed on the shoulders of each of my sons the mark of an arrow in colours indelible, trusting that if ever”—— Sir Paladour bared his shoulder, and displayed the mark, and yielding to all the filial delight of recognition, he threw himself voluntarily into the arms of his father : then hastily withdrawing himself, “ My lord and father,” he cried, “ since it is mine honoured fate to call you so, haste, in the name of Heaven, and save a worthier and happier son than I. That Sir Amirald, my noble father, who was my brother-in-arms before I knew him, my brother in blood on our disastrous pro-

gress to the Castle of C  urtenaye, chafed with his heavy armour, threw it off to bathe in a stream we were passing, and I saw his shoulder bear the same mark as mine."---
"And where, where is he now?" cried Raymond, trembling in the new-felt agonies of the paternal heart.

"He fought yesterday beneath the banners of De Foix," said Paladour; "and, late in the day, I saw him borne a prisoner into the Castle of Tarascon. Full surely will the Crusaders wreak their vengeance on him as a recreant to their cause, sparing neither for his valour nor his early youth."---
"Away! to horse, to horse! Mine armour---let my banner fly!" shouted Raymond. "Gaston---Bernard---Guy---slaves, why loiter ye now? Thou, Gaston," as they hurried to the tent, "hast a sharp spur: ride, ride, good fellow, for life and death, to the walls of Tarascon, and summon De Foix and De Commines, as they are gallant lords, as they are Christian men, to join us with all their forces

beneath the towers of the Castle by dawn. Tell them, they ride in rescue of the noblest knight that ever buckled on harness beneath their banners---my son, my son!" he exclaimed, bitter tears of agony starting from his eyes. "And thou, fair son," he said, "quit thy fearful purpose, and strike with me in aid of thy brother: thou wilt not rend thy father's heart the very hour thou wast first folded to it."---"My lord and father," said the youth sadly and fixedly, "I must needs resign my purpose, since I may not dishonour by a felon doom the noble house I spring from; but seek thy happiness from Amiral, not from me. That my soul hath shaken off the burthen of guilt predoomed and preternatural, I bless heaven and the saints; but life, love, and hope blasted for ever, would even my father wish me to live?"

"Hark!" cried Raymond, "what tumult is this?---who breaks in on us? Merciful Heaven, what figure is this---and where-

fore?" As he spoke, a figure darted into the tent, and, with a shriek which mingled joy and agony, clung round Paladour. In the dishevelled dress of a page, mingled with the flowing hair, the panting bosom, and the thrilling voice of a woman, Raymond saw only an increase of mystery and amazement; but Paladour beheld in the page, whose bandage was removed, and whose livid dye had been washed off, his bride, his victim—Isabelle of Courtenaye.

The shock seemed too much for both. After twice enfolding each other—after twice holding each other at short distance, that they might gaze, and drink in recognition at eyes that thirsted for the view---Paladour at length uttered "Thou livest:" and as Isabelle, exhausted by emotion, sank on her knees, he sank along with her.

The Monk of Montcalm, who had accompanied the *ill-favoured page* to the tent, had been apprized on the way of her story, as on the intelligence of the intend-

ed sacrifice of Paladour she had hastened back from her prescribed pilgrimage, entreated but a moment's interview with him, and pledged her life for the effect of her presence. This was communicated by the monk to Raymond; and the blessings of a father were breathed on the heads of both.

The trumpets of Count Raymond sounded to horse, while the lovers still knelt before him. "Oh, what means that fearful sound?" cried Isabelle, clinging to Paladour. "Art thou to be thus' found and lost in a moment?"

"Fear not, my love," cried Paladour, "the might of many is in my arm, the spirit of an armed host within my breast, since I beheld thee. I go no more a desperate reckless man to battle: I clasp a bride, and go to save a brother."

"Go then, my lover, my hero, my husband," said Isabelle, the pride of her lordly line flushing a cheek long pale:

“let not the trumpet call thee twice!”---
“Were it the trump of doom,” cried Paladour, while he hastened to clasp his helmet and gorget the while, “I should not obey the summons, till I have heard how I am thus blest as by miracle.”---“It will be a tale for our after-life,” said Isabelle, “to tell thee how I was borne insensible from the castle by that evil woman, in the sad distraction of the hour when my unhappy kinsman perished. She had many in the castle to work her will, and there was none to oppose her. Thee, too, whom she found breathless and bleeding in her way, she caused to be borne to that dreary tower thou rememberest. I have often thought there was goodness in that fearful woman to tend us as she did; but for some dark purpose of her own, it was suspended or overruled. I recovered; but only to see thy noble mind a wreck, my Paladour; and, with bitterer anguish still, to feel that my presence but thickened the cloud that overshadowed thy

soul. That fearful being is skilful, as well as wicked, beyond her species. She taught me to stain my visage, and disguise and disfigure my form, that I might still be near thee without danger to thy tottering reason; she counselled me to follow thee in the guise of the hideous and disfeatured being I appeared; and sometimes my harp, and sometimes my voice, had that power for which I bore my degraded state with joy, and wept in ecstasy when I was alone."

"But why not sooner recognize me, my beloved, my bride?"

"Alas! my love, the sound of woman's name, or woman's love, overshadowed thy soul with deeper darkness. For years would I have watched, and wept, and prayed in my disguise: but now thou knowest me, my Paladour!" she cried, fixing her bright and swimming eyes on him as she spoke.

"Know thee!" cried Paladour, clasping her to his bosom, "know thee! Were I to live for ages, never could I know the

truth of woman's faith, the strength of woman's constancy, the power and the purity of woman's love!"

A herald, as he spoke, appeared at the entrance of the tent. "I go," cried Paladour, rushing forth, while Isabelle, who had no other favour now to offer, cut off a lock of her long-neglected hair, and waved it towards him as he flung himself on his war-steed. "Set on, my noble father!" cried Paladour, riding by the side of the Count.---"Hold, fair son!" said Raymond; "methinks a messenger rides towards us. Come ye," he said, as the messenger spurred his wearied steed onward, "come ye from the city of Tarascon, from our noble brothers-in-arms De Foix and De Comminges? or come ye from the Castle, where the Crusaders have betaken them?"

"I come, my lord, from the city of Tarascon, whence the forces of De Foix and De Comminges are pouring forth fast in aid of the assault. But, noble lord, as I passed

the Castle of Tarascon, there were strange tidings abroad. The Crusaders are said to be dying by hundreds within the walls: the gates are thrown open; and all who can yet escape are flying from it for life!"

"On! my noble friends---set on! Fellow, I will reward thee well; but, hark thee, hast thou no other tidings?"

"None, my noble lord; save that, as I rode past the castle, I saw an iron pillar reared on its loftiest turret, and piles of faggots heaped around it: for, live or die, the Crusaders have sworn to burn their prisoners to ashes ere the sun reach noon."

Count Raymond dashed his spurs into his steed's flank. "Away! away!" he cried, "tarry not for De Foix's loitering troops!--tarry not for mortal aid! *He* burns---the pile is blazing while I speak! Gentlemen, noble knights, *fathers*, set on!--on, in the name of God!" The army was all in motion as he spoke. "Where is my son Paladour?" cried the agitated parent.---"By thy side, my

lord and father."---"Back, back, I charge thee, lest I lose ye both. Thou wilt not ! Well, then, win thy brother's life, boy, if thou canst ; but in the strife. spare, spare thine own as *mine!*"

CHAPTER IX.

My senses blaze : my last, I know, is come,
My last of hours. 'Tis wondrous horrid !—Now
My lawless love and boundless power reproach me !

LEE'S *Mithridates*.

THE Castle of Tarascon was that day indeed a scene of horror. The Crusaders, on their defeat, had thrown themselves within its walls in distraction, less at the danger that threatened them from the investing armies, than at the disgrace of their overthrow : Prince Lewis, in sullen despair, had shut himself up in his chamber, and menaced death to any intruder. The Bishop of Toulouse alone preserved his resolution. He appointed the following morning for performing the obsequies of the Count de Montfort ; and,

to heighten the solemnity, resolved to celebrate high mass in the chapel of the Castle, inviting the Crusaders to partake of the holy rite. This arranged, the bishop, summoning Lambert de Limons, toiled all day like a common man in inspecting and strengthening the fortifications of the Castle; and towards evening retired to write letters, and dispatch couriers in every direction to summon instant aid.

While he was thus employed, Lambert de Limons loudly murmured against the number of prisoners that were within the walls, and demanded, if the attack on the castle were turned into a siege, how so many useless mouths were to be fed? --- "We will take order for that," said the bishop. "Go thou on the instant, and offer the prisoners their choice, either to renounce their heretical faith, or prepare to be dealt with as heretics when mass is said to-morrow." --- "My lord," said Lambert reverently, "there be many of the Crusaders prisoners in the town; and

how if the Count de Foix should retaliate, and deal to them such measure as we deal to ours?"---"If it be so," said the bishop, with a sanctimonious air, "they are sure of heaven, perishing as martyrs in its cause. But, bold Lambert," he added with a smile, "thou art scarce as wise as brave, or thou wouldst know that the avarice of De Foix and his associate are ample pledge for the safety of their prisoners. They will not lightly sacrifice lives, the least precious of which will be ransomed for a thousand marks of silver; while our sorry prey would be dearly redeemed at a liard for the whole community."---"But how, my lord, if they should accept the condition?"---"I trust their obstinacy for that," said the bishop. "Go, and do my bidding."

The Monk of Montcalm, who was present at this conference, stood aghast till, startled by the departure of De Limons, he attempted to remonstrate with the bishop. "It is not possible," he said---"it is not possible

that you can harbour such horrible purpose ! You speak but to terrify these wretched men.”---“ Thou wilt see that by to-morrow’s dawn,” replied the bishop, “ an’ the smoke of the faggots do not dim thine eyes !”---“ It is not possible !” repeated the monk. “ The good God of mercy will not permit such cruelty to be wrought in his name. Also this thing will be sin unto me, seeing I have pledged my faith as a Christian to the prisoners for their safety.” The bishop answered him in the words of the Abbot of St. Denis, when the king of England pretended a scruple of conscience in recognizing Pope Innocent in preference to his rival Anaclet, “ *Songez seulement comment vous repondrez à Dieu de vos autres péchés : pour celui-là, je m’en charge.*”---“ Yet beware what thou doest, lord bishop !” said the monk, trembling with fear and resentment. “ A noble knight, once a Crusader, is among thine intended victims, and ——” “ He shall perish first !” said the bishop, who burned to wreak his

vengeance on Genevieve through her lover. "Not all the lands that Raymond's victory yesterday hath won back for him, should buy that youth's life for an hour!" The monk redoubled his supplications.--"Thou hast prayed to marble saints, and they perchance have heard thee," said the bishop; "but now thou hast to deal with one of more impenetrable material than marble or adamant."--"And they must burn, youth and maiden, warrior and infant!" cried the monk. "Mercy, mercy! dread lord," he cried, falling at the bishop's feet, while tears streamed down his hoary beard--"mercy, in the name of the All-merciful!--on thyself, as well as on thy captives! Oh, how canst thou call for mercy who grantest none!"--"Debase not thyself in vain!" said the bishop. "Go shrieve the penitent who waits for thee in the camp of Count Raymond!" The monk arose from his knees, and waved his withered arm towards heaven. "I am guiltless of their blood!" he cried: "but

for thee, thou man of cruelty—for so I dare call thee in thy pride---thou who rendest the flock thou shouldst feed, look if thou be not soon repaid as thou hast deserved!" He stood near a casement that looked on the walls of Tarascon as he spoke. "Thou didst send that Sir Ambrose to treat for the ransom of the Crusaders; and, lo! I see a gibbet erected on the bartizan, and they are dragging towards it one who struggles."---"Are they about to hang him?" said the bishop without raising his eyes from the letter he was writing.---"On the instant, unless a swift messenger be sent to stop their cruelty."---"The rope will have done its office ere a messenger could reach them," said the bishop coolly.---"In the name of Heaven, then, let a mass be said for his soul!" cried the monk.---"That were needless too, for without all doubt he will die in his heretic faith," answered the bishop.---"Holy Heaven!" cried the poor monk, "can one hear of the fate of a dying wretch thus unmov-

ed! Now they have dragged him to the gibbet! what strength despair can give! He hath burst from them---he grapples with them---now they drag him forward on his knees---he clings to the gibbet's foot---they cannot untwine his grasp---the rope is wound round his neck."---"Good night, Sir Ambrose," said the bishop without raising his head: "thou hast been somewhat troublesome and useless of late; and I sent thee of an errand where thy foul tongue and fierce temper have met their meed. Dotard, stand not there wringing thine hands! The herald of Count Raymond hath sounded his trumpet twice. Go, and assoil thy living penitent: the dead are past thy cares."---"I go," said the Monk of Montcalm, "and Heaven grant that I may shed around his death-hour that peace which I fear me, bloody prelate, will be denied to thine!"---"Mauleon," said the bishop (without noticing his departure) to one of his military attendants, "thou sawest to-day, as I

passed through the hall of the castle, where the prisoners were assembled ere they were conveyed to the dungeon---thou sawest I fixed mine eyes on a woman who stood amongst them?" --- "I did, my lord, and understood the signal well."---"How now, thou insolent knave?---the woman I speak of was neither young nor fair; she was distinguished only by her grey hairs. Go, fetch her hither instantly!"

In a few moments she stood in his presence; and the bishop made a signal to his attendants to quit the chamber. While removing her mantle she gazed fixedly on him, disclosing the visage he expected to behold. "It is thou, then?" he cried; "but wherefore art thou here?"---"Wherefore is the vulture ever near the prey?" replied the female. "I was wandering near the skirts of the battle yesterday: they took me for an Albigeois,---and I am here."---"And here, then, thy life of mystery is doomed to close: the hand of Heaven hath overtaken

thee at last !”—“ Name not Heaven,” said the female, “ for what hast thou to do with it ? It is mirth for the fiends when hypocrites talk of Heaven.”—“ Thou canst best tell tidings of thine own associates,” said the bishop : “ they will, ere long, welcome the arrival of one who can teach even *them* new lessons of crime.”---“ Woe to those who first taught *me* !” answered the female.---“ Out on thee, hag !” cried the prelate : “ thy crimes were wrought in the mere wantonness of thy depravity ! Was it not by thy devices that the Lord of Courtenaye expired in flames, and the Lady Isabelle and her bridegroom perished ?”---“ Yet Paladour fought but yesterday beneath the banners of Count Raymond ; and Isabelle, in menial habit, sleeps this night at the feet of her husband.”---“ What sayest thou ?---but thou *canst not* speak truth !” cried the bishop. “ Miserable woman ! as thou hast hope of life, or of mercy, speak the truth !”---“ Hope of life ? bribe the fools who value it :---of mercy ? who

ever sought it at *thy* hands? But I *will* speak—not for thy will, but mine own. There were three on earth on whom I had vowed revenge: on two it hath been fulfilled, and on the third it *shall* be. Far above the wretched maniac as they stood in state and power, mine hand hath reached them. I knew the vow which was bound on Paladour's soul in childhood, and from childhood I watched him. I led him to the Castle of Courtenaye when his age was ripe to fulfil it. I obtained admission there by working on the guilty terrors of the Lord of Courtenaye, and my admission facilitated my purpose.”

—“ Hold, wretch ! Was all that thou shewedst us in the vaults of the castle that night mere illusion?—“ Not *all*,” replied his companion with a withering smile. “ Paladour beheld the bleeding form of his pale bride ; and to thee I displayed the triple crown of flames, which shall ere long, I trust, empale thy burning brows. My spells wrought—the hour arrived, the blow was struck.”—

“ And yet thou sayest Paladour and Isabelle live ?”---“ I crushed them while they contended with my purpose ; I relented when they became its victims ; nor were they ever the objects, but the implements, of mine hatred : and when the youth purposed to join the Crusaders, I shuddered to add to his imaginary guilt the burthen of real parricide : for, had he slain Raymond of Toulouse, he would have slain his own father. And now, have I not kept my vow and wreaked my vengeance ? The Lord of Courtenaye perished in flames and torture ; Raymond was punished by twenty years’ privation of his child : there remains but one more victim, and that victim is---thyself !”---“ Announce my doom, most potent prophetess ! most sage sorceress !” cried the bishop, with a disdainful laugh,---“ Thou shalt appear in the spirit before the judgment-seat, or ere to-morrow’s sun be set-----” --- “ Maniac ! mendicant ! witching hag !” cried the proud prelate in scorn, “ whose menaces are despicable as

thyself art loathsome, is it thou who darest to predict my doom ?"---" Nor maniac, mendicant, nor witch," cried the female, her voice swelling to a tone of fearful power: "it is *Marie de Mortemar* who speaks thy doom, and defies her own !"

She snatched a lamp from the table as she spoke, and stood full before him. "This was the face that men thought fair, till thou didst cover it with dishonour ; this was the form that was pure, till thou didst debase it ! Oh !" she shrieked, "that I could thus lay bare my soul before thee, it would be the reflection of thine own---despair !"

The bishop's blood ran cold in his veins. He retreated some paces ; but he tried to overcome his fear by rage. "Vision from the grave !" he exclaimed, "abhorred spectre ! thus hast thou often glared in my dreams ; but thou shalt haunt me no longer, waking or slumbering ! Ho ! Mauleon, Savari !" he shouted to his pages, stamping, "bear this hag to the dungeon!--No : " he paused ;

“she shall not hold intercourse with agents from earth or hell! Is there a nook in these walls where she may be kept in safety, and apart from the other prisoners?”---“So please you, my lord, there is one adjacent to this chamber.”---“Doth it communicate with any other apartment in the castle?”---“With none, reverend lord, save with the chapel, which hath been long deserted.”---“Bear her thither on the instant! I will try whether the foul shape, with which that fiendish spirit is intrusted, be proof against the flames to-morrow!”

Marie de Mortemar departed without uttering a word; but she gave a glance, as she parted, that the bishop, in his pride, shrank from. He stood appalled for a moment; then issuing orders that the pile should be lit as mass was said on the morrow, he retired to rest; but not without a previous and minute inspection of the planetary heavens, now in their midnight glory. All there appeared favourable, as all on earth

was calm. There was not a sound from the camp of Count Raymond or the city of Tarascon, though the moving of the glimmering lights in each told of preparation all alive.

The bishop threw himself on his bed, giving orders to the pages, who slept at his feet, to wake him before dawn. The morning broke, and preparations were making in different parts of the castle for two very different celebrations, though the cruel superstition of the age deemed them the same in religious importance and efficacy.

The chapel, long neglected, was now, like a banished favourite recalled, arrayed with all the pomp the time could allow of, by the ecclesiastics of the bishop's train, who well knew how to direct such preparation. Meanwhile, an iron stake had been fixed in the massive roof of stone with which the highest turret of the castle was covered; the prisoners, who were all Albigeois, verifying to a man the bishop's prediction of their obstinacy, and

announcing their resolution to perish in the flames, rather than renounce their faith.

The obsequies of the Count de Montfort, whose body, clothed in armour, with a crucifix placed in the hands, lay on a bier in the centre of the aisle, were first performed, the bishop and all the ecclesiastics chaunting the "*Dirige gressus meos.*" High mass was then celebrated by the bishop with all the pomp of the Catholic ritual; and after the distribution of the consecrated elements to the ecclesiastics, the laity approached to partake of the bread. Hundreds of armed figures (Prince Lewis and Sir Aymer alone being absent) crowded round the altar; and many a stately head and stubborn knee was bent, and many a gauntleted hand locked in earnest devotion, while the holy rites went on. In a short time a slight confusion was remarked: some who had partaken, instead of retiring to their seats in the aisle, remained, as if unable to quit the spot; some, who still knelt, seemed, after a few

efforts to quit their posture, to sink still lower; while others, who had retired a few steps, sat down in the aisle, and resting their drooping heads on their hands, appeared falling into a lethargy.

The ecclesiastic who held the patin to the bishop, plucked his robe, as if to mark these extraordinary appearances; but in doing so his countenance assumed a strange expression, and he fell speechless beside the altar. Two who attempted to raise him, continued to bend over him helplessly, as if unable to raise themselves from their incumbent posture; and a fourth, dashing the holy element he bore to the ground, and pointing to it with a look of horror, sank beside them. The symptoms every moment became more unequivocal: those who with eyes uplifted in devotion were partaking of the rite, felt them fixed; those who had clasped their hands in prayer, felt them stiffening; while loathing sickness or excruciating pain marked the different but fatal character of

the malady, as it operated on different constitutions. And those who had not yet participated, believing the groans and vehement gestures of the sufferers to proceed only from the intensity of their devotion, pressed frantically on to the altar, to partake of the sacred enthusiasm the rites had inspired.

At this moment the day broke fully, and, through the many-tinted windows of the chapel, flung ghastly light on the features of the dying.

At length the terrible conviction burst on all: a cry of horror rang through the church, and the dreadful sounds of "Poison, poison! the holy elements are poisoned!" echoed on every side, and in every accent of despair and death. Through dead and dying---the convulsed, who caught his robes in their agonies, and the still conscious, who implored his benediction in vain---the Bishop of Toulouse burst his way on the first conviction; and, on reaching his apartment, applied the strongest antidotes that the skill of the age

could furnish, and with which he had always the precaution to be amply provided. The very first attempts proved their total inefficacy, and the bishop felt "that he must appear in the spirit before the judgment-seat, ere that day's sun was set." His resolution did not desert him for a moment in this dreadful emergency; and subduing all expression of the torture that already began to prey like a living fire on his vitals, he commanded his attendants instantly to bring Marie de Mortemar before him, still cherishing the belief congenial to all proud and powerful minds, that he bore "a charmed life," and that means, even supernatural, would yet interpose for its preservation. As Marie de Mortemar was led into the chamber, the triumph that sparkled in her eye, and dilated her whole form, restored to her wasted frame somewhat of the beauty by which it had once been eminently distinguished. This identity with her former self made the bishop shudder. Past crimes and

horrors seemed present again, as she stood before him. "Fiend," said the bishop raising his livid eyes---"fiend, this is thy work!"---"Mine," she answered firmly---"mine; and the last act of my life is its most glorious. This is indeed dying worthy of the cause for which alone I have groaned under the burthen of life for twenty years. But for thy foolish malice, that confined me in the neighbourhood of the chapel, instead of remanding me to my dungeon, I had never had such ample power of vengeance: the shaft was aimed at thee, but its flight hath laid many low."---"Boast of thy crime," said the bishop, "while thou mayest; but a few moments, and thou shalt expiate it in flames."---"Better perish in flames, than live to be their fuel for ever and ever," said Marie de Mortemar. "Hag, thou liest!" cried the prelate. "I never feared man nor fiend. Wherever my disembodied spirit may wander, there it will *rule*: I shall be among the spirits of the earth's high lords---

the ancient conquerors---those who, like me, conceived purposes too vast for earth, but who will realize them in other regions ! If the spirit survive death, its power will survive also : I shall sit with kings.”---“Thou wilt, indeed, sit with the disturbers of the earth---the defacers of God’s creation !” cried Marie de Mortemar, fixing her eyes on his convulsed features ; “ but where are they ? ” “ Vile hag ! ” cried the bishop, “ I sent not for thee to ban and rave ! Thou, who knowest the power of that deadly venom, knowest perhaps its antidote : disclose it, and I will exchange thy stake for a throne. I dread not death, but I would live till my sound reached to the earth’s limits. Give me life, and I will reward thee beyond all thy delirious dreams of vengeance.”---“ Such antidote I have,” she cried ; “ but thou shalt never taste its virtue ! Oh, hope not, hope not, man of pride and power, that the earth’s treasure could win that secret from me ! I tell thee, were thy body formed of ada-

mant, the drug is so potent, it would expel thy spirit from it ere an hour be past.”---“Seize the sorceress, and chain her to the stake!” cried the Bishop of Toulouse, collapsing in mortal sickness. “I will see her burned with mine own eyes!”---“There, too, thou art baffled and deceived!” cried Marie, “thine eyes will close in agony ere a faggot can be lit, ere a flame can be raised! Hark, hark to the trumpets of Raymond of Toulouse! His catapults will shake these walls ere the words have parted from my lips! See how fast the bands of De Foix and De Comminges pour from Tarascon, and all against this distracted castle, filled with the dying and the dead. Hark,” she cried listening to the screams of horror and agony that burst from the chapel below, “hark to thy knell. Thine enemies are around thee---thine allies in blood and crime are perishing. Chain me to the stake: burn me an’ ye will; but, ere I am in ashes, thou wilt be in flames.” The trumpets of Count Raymond were in-

deed heard as she spoke ; and the attendants, quitting hold of her at the sound, rushed towards a casement to ascertain the truth of what she said. Marie de Mortemar seized the moment of her release : she tore back a casement that opened on a bartizan ; for a moment she stood there, gazing downward---“ I come, I come !” she cried ; then waving her arm in the direction of the chapel, from which the cries of horror and death at that moment redoubled---“ Follow---follow,” she cried, “ follow all of you---he waits for you !” and flinging herself from the bartizan, her body was dashed to atoms on the rocky terrace. The bishop viewed her fate with less emotion than he heard her tidings. “ Look forth,” he said, “ look forth, and see if her intelligence be true :---a trumpet seems to ring in mine ears ; but whether it be that of the enemy, or of doom, I know not---nor reck !”

The attendants looked forth, and beheld all the plain overspread with the array of Count

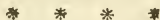
Raymond, who led the van at full speed ; while the troops of De Foix and his associate were pouring fast from the city of Tarascon, their lances gleaming in the morning sun. “ They come ! ” cried the attendants ; “ and who is there to meet them ?---a dying band, and a defenceless castle ! ”---“ Am *I* not here,” cried the bishop---“ am I not here still ? Cravens---cowards, fetch mine armour ! ” and he applied his hands to his robes as if bracing on his armour. Of his four attendants, three fled as he spoke to make desperate defence : one alone remained to watch the last moments of the mighty prelate, on whose associations the sound of war operated even amid the agonies of death.

“ Charge ! charge ! ” he cried ; “ we shall win the day yet : can we fail with such noble aid ? Thou art with us, Simon de Montfort---and thou, Enguerrand de Vitry---and thou, Raymond of Toulouse, restored to the banners thou once foughtest beneath so

bravely ! Why comes that pale Lord of Courtenaye," he cried, his thoughts all running on the dead,---" and that strange bridegroom and his bleeding bride ? Well, let them ride up : we are a gallant company. Charge ! charge your lances at their throats ! Hold ! who is the leader that waves ye on ? Ride not up that precipice ; see what yawns below ! He doffs his helmet. See---see his visage ! Follow not his beckoning. He plunges---and we must plunge too---for ever, for ever ! Dark spirit, I will grapple with thee !" He fell---and expired.

Meanwhile the castle was one wide scene of consternation, horror, and helplessness. Lambert de Limons had perished ; the men-at-arms had lowered the draw-bridge to effect their escape from what they believed to be diabolical power. The fierce and rapid assault of Count Raymond gave no choice and met no opponent : his troops in a moment deluged the castle with a tide of unre-

sisted victory. The surviving Crusaders made good the postern with their lives, to secure the safety of Prince Lewis. The Monk of Montcalm made his way to the chapel, to shrieve the dying and say masses for the dead. Count Raymond and Paladour hastened to the turret, where the victims were already chained to the stake. Raymond stood exhausted ; while Paladour, with one strong grasp, rent Amirald's chain ; and would have folded his brother to his heart, had not Amirald, bursting from his arms, first struggled to break those of Genevieve.



It was but a short space after these events, that Isabelle of Courtenaye, restored to her honours and wealth, and reunited to Paladour, was twining the dark tresses of Genevieve, whom she termed " dear lady and sister," with the wreaths of pearl that formed part of her splendid bridal array.

The espousals of Paladour and Amirald were held in the territorial Castle of Raymond of Toulouse. The Abbot of Normoutier (though the younger pair were heretical) spoke the nuptial benediction; and Sir Aymer du Chastelroi gave away Genevieve.

We pause not to describe the splendour of the bridal, nor to relate how many valiant sons and beautiful daughters sprang from those auspicious nuptials: but we must record a circumstance "more germane" to our tale---that the difference of birth and creed was never known to disturb the affection that subsisted between the high-born Lady of Courtenaye and the humble bride of Amirald.

Pierre, the pastor, lived honoured and cherished in the Count's palace, long enough to feel the little hands of Amirald's and Genevieve's offspring placed between his---and then departed in peace and hope. His body, as a heretic's, was not permitted to lie in conse-

crated ground : it was interred without the walls of the city of Toulouse, and a plain stone bore this inscription---“ *Petrus Vallensis.*” A few months after his interment, the Monk of Montcalm, returning from a distant pilgrimage, halted near this stone : it was twilight,---and he asked a passenger to explain the characters to him. The passenger told him that the remains of Pierre the pastor rested beneath the stone on which his staff was struck. “Then, truly,” said the monk, “I will tell a bead or two, and utter a prayer for him---heretic as he was---ere I quit this spot.” He knelt as he spoke, and the passenger went his way. The next morning he returned by chance, and saw the lifeless body of the monk, bent, as if in prayer, on the tomb-stone of the pastor. With his staff he had made shift to inscribe in the dust near him, “ *Anima mea, cum anima tuâ, heu multum deflende ! pacem eternam consequatur ;*” ---thus, in his last moments, testifying his attachment to the pastor’s character, if not

to his creed. May those of different faiths, like them, imitate their tolerance and embrace their example !

FINIS.

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